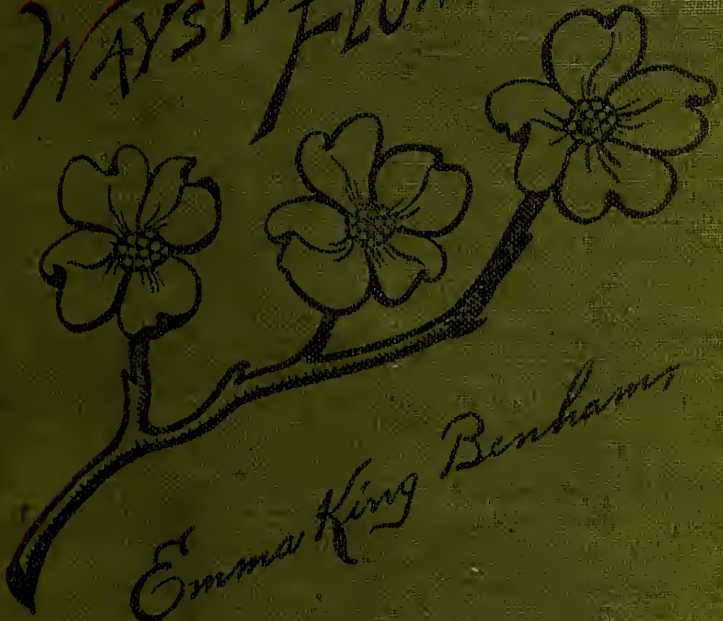
Wayside Flowers



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WAYSIDE FLOWERS

BY

EMMA KING-BENHAM.

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TO

MY FATHER AND MOTHER.

PROEM.

My life has been that of the wayside flower,
And not of a hothouse rose;
A struggle to live through shine and shower,
A struggle to live if but an hour,
That I might some beauty disclose.

Not as the pampered rose in fullest bloom
That few are allowed to know,
But as flowers that claim only standing room,
To rob life's long highways of their gloom—
They that live, and not all for show.

They that smiling grow 'neath the hedgerow there,
Bright as the face of a child;
That climb, and cling, and bloom everywhere,
Spilling their perfume upon the air,
As though Heaven on them always smiled.

O, theirs is the life I have sought to live—
Just to fill some empty nook;
To fill it with sunshine of love, and give
It to the world to after me live,
As I give to my world, this book.

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WAYSIDE FLOWERS.

See! by our pathways, and 'neath hedgerows tall,
Riotous wanderers, by wayside and wall!
Spilling their fragrance, for every-day needs,
Every-day comforters, with heart-soothing deeds,
Lighting our pathway when grim storm-cloud lowers,
Trusted companions, our dear wayside flowers.

Dear wayside flowers, so trusted and true,
From folly's gay bowers, I turn unto you;
Nature's own darlings, by wayside and wall,
Cheerily smiling though dark shadows fall;
Teaching patient endurance in this life of ours,
Every-day comforters, dear wayside flowers.

Dear wayside flowers, lo! oft kindly deeds,
That bloom unawares, like flowers among weeds;
Oft kind thoughts heart given, and unto heart,
That make of earth Heaven, and of Heaven, part.
May these line our pathway throughout life's long
hours,
Lighting it bravely, our dear wayside flowers.

THE QUAIL AMONG THE WHEAT.

With the rising mists of morning
  Sounds a plaintive call, and sweet;
Weird pæan to greet day's dawning;
  'Tis the quail among the wheat.

Then, like an answering echo,
  Or an echo in a dream,
There comes an answer piping,
  'Cross waves of "living green."

And then, at dew-crowned evening,
  When the glad June day is done,
I hear the weird call pealing,
  And the answers, one by one.

And methinks no matin fitter,
  Nay, nor vesper hymn more sweet,
Than the call at morn and even
  Of the quail among the wheat.

THE WOODLAND MERE.

A mystic pool, wood-bordered, lies
Peacefully sleeping 'neath sunny skies,
And peacefully sleeps 'neath skies that frown,
And peacefully sleeps when snows sift down.

Beneath summer moons it lies at rest,
With fragrant lilies upon its breast.
Beneath angry skies it makes no moan;
And winds sigh o'er it, in monotone.

Does it sleep on death or bridal bed,
Awaiting the hand that leads, or led,
While pitying trees guard its resting place,
Reaching their shel'tring arms o'er its face?

What is the mystery guarding this
Deep-sleeping pool, the winds, sighing, kiss?
What will awaken it from its sleep?
Who bade the soft winds their vigils keep?

MY HARP.

O, come and sit beside me
  While I touch my old Harp's strings,
And woo it into speaking
  Of the quaint and beauteous things
That cluster 'round about its frame,
  And have from days of old;
From this, my treasured instrument,
  To the Heavenly harps of gold.

It has an olden glory
  That has followed down the years—
An olden, golden glory
  From the past, that still adheres—
Till it's mellowed like old vintage,
  And all hallowed by time,
And floods a sparkling nectar
  That flows in limpid rhyme.

And oftentimes it tells me
Tales of which I never tire;
Of when, in days of eld, it sang
With cymbal and with lyre.
It sang with great rejoicings,
And it sang for hearts most sad,
And it pealed forth hallelujahs
That made gathered hundreds glad.

I lean my heart against its frame,
That stands so staunch and strong;
My fingers press the lisping strings
That gush forth into song—
A song that soothes the heart-pains,
As it soothed in days of old
The hearts that were a-weary
With longings manifold.

O! me old Harp, so resounding,
With quaint echoes from the past,
Plead with me, for safe mooring,
When my waiting-time is fast—
Ah! fast—nearing its completion!
And, when I reach death's river wide,
May kindly boatman bear you,
With me, across its tide!

THE BIRTH OF A RAINBOW.

The great lake lay dark before us,
O'erhung by a darker sky,
While now and then a crested wave
Ran hurriedly scudding by.

The screaming gulls flashed snowy wings,
Then sparkled out of sight;
Against the darkly brooding sky
Winged they their fearless flight.

Off to the west are storm-clouds piled,
Far above the city fair,
While fiery thunderbolts of Jove
Are hurled into the air.

Then comes the rain—a dashing spray—
While the sun laughs out in scorn;
When, lo! unto the sobbing lake
A rainbow-child is born.

FIREFLIES.

Each night a mimic procession,
  All starred with torchlights bright,
Files past my silent window,
  With the stillness of the night.

I watch the silent mimicry
  As the mystic hosts pass by;
Is it but a reproduction—
  A reflection of the sky—

To taunt the myriad stars above?
  Ah, a nether sky, in sooth—
A pulsing, darkling, sparkling sky,
  O, most beautiful, in truth!—

Or Dame Nature's panorama,
  Her pyrotechnical display,
That June may see her roses,
  Thus, by night, as well as day?

IN THE FOREST.

'Tis morning, and a morn in early June-time,
And alone in the wide forest now I stand,
And feel I'm very close to Nature's kind heart,
With this, her book, wide open at my hand.

And could I turn its pages one by one, now,
And read her language, writ in flowers and trees,
In nesting birds, and in the spiked thorn, there,
In crawling insect, and in whispering leaves—

O! manifold her writings; could I read them,
I then could time the pulsing of her heart;
The great kind heart that "mothers" all in lifetime,
And then in death no thing is set apart:

But, taken all into her wide embracing,
A mother true we find her at the last.
O, Mother Nature! ancient as the earth is!
Sweet mystery! as in the ages past.

I note the swaying branches up above me,
As though slowly wav'd by some great unseen hand;
I hear the lisping whisper of the leaflets—
O could I but their whisp'rings understand!

I breathe the spicy odors of the woodland
And watch the sunlight filter through the leaves,
While heavy are the silences around me,
Save for the lisping murmur of the trees.

Some nod and beckon, and I follow on then;
Some wave a welcome; some in warning bend;
Some stoop and kiss my cheek, with soft caressing,
As slowly on my dreamy way I wend.

O myriad the beauties all around me!
A dragonfly glides swiftly 'cross my way
Like a phantom, searching for lost treasure;
It stops and shivers where the sunbeams play.

Just now a bumblebee booms 'cross the silence,
A busy searcher after treasure, too;
While through a break among the waving treetops
I see a hawk, outlined against the blue.

And yonder is poor "Jack" within his pulpit,
His lowly, his silent sermon preaching,
Patiently unto his world around him,
"Upward, ever upward," pointing, teaching.

And just beside the mosses at my feet here's
An Indian pipe, erect upon its stem;
Waxen pure and fairylike it stands, ah!
A ghostly "pipe o' peace," left by red men.

O beautiful the forest in the June-time,
When flow'rs and grasses dot the mellow mould;
I half expect to see spry elves and brownies
And merry Robin Hood, of days of old.

Thus dreaming, ever dreaming, on I wander,
While boughs bend low and nod, or warnings shake;
For Nature is the tried and true and steadfast,
And soon upon her bosom rest I'll take.

SUPPLICATION.

O thou unfathomable Future!
What hast thou in store for me?
What hast thou in thy keeping
That thou guardst so jealously?

Hast joy, or hast thou sorrow,
Gay pleasure, or bleak pain?
Or wilt allot of each a portion,
As the seasons wax and wane?

Canst not leave ajar thy portals
And let me once look within?
I would solve thy mystic "morrow,"
Where my happiness doth begin!

O leave ajar thy portals
One moment—a tiny space!
And let me read thy holdings,
Mystic Future, face to face!

BEAUTIFUL NIGHT.

I love ye so, O summer night!
Sweet starlight dim, or the moonlight,
When gentle breezes, murmuring, blow,
Waving the coy flowrets to and fro,
Then doth their perfume, divinely sweet,
Rise like incense the bright stars to greet.
O sweet twilight! O afterglow!
Beauteous night, I love ye so!
I love ye so, beautiful night,
Beautiful, beautiful night!

O summer night! sweet are my dreams
'Neath the starlight, or the moon's beams—
Dreams that are daydreams, Heavenly sweet,
Dreams that thy murmurings make complete,
Like fairy voices that ebb and flow,
Now in the June-time, and afterglow.
O sweet twilight! O afterglow!
Beauteous night, I love ye so!
I love ye so, beautiful night,
Beautiful, beautiful night!

O summer night! O winds that blow,
Waving the treetops to and fro!
I see their branches oft "downward bent,
Like keys of an immense instrument,"
And listen to hear their mystic chime,
But the night winds sigh a gentle rhyme—
O sweet twilight! O afterglow!
Beauteous night, I love ye so!
I love ye so, beautiful night,
Beautiful, beautiful night!

WOMEN AND WAR.

A soldier boy went to the wars one day,
  Seeking glory, renown and fame;
And Maid Marian wept her heart away
  For a letter that never came.
For the missive stopped with the wagon train,
Whose belching smoke dimmed the rolling plain,
  All, all on one summer day.
Women's tears and prayers are oft in vain,
  When the grim War God has full play.

A soldier boy rushed to the battle's front,
  In the thick of the smoke and flame,
Forgetting the lass that prayed for him,
  Thinking but of his country's fame;
And a bullet spied where his warm heart lay,
And, singing a war-song, sped on its way,
  And through it war's message burned.
And Maid Marian wept her heart away
  For the soldier that ne'er returned.

THE MUSICIAN.

The composer's thoughts, ah, what are they,
As he dreaming sits, at the close of day?
O the heart then speaks for the longing soul,
And in music—hark! how the song-waves roll.
Aye, list to that melody as it drips
From the restless, flitting finger-tips!
'Tis wild as the March winds at their play,
And as pure as clouds at break of day;
Weird as the tone of a distant knell
Borne from the tongue of an old church bell;
Warm as the sun on October days,
As he sinks to rest in a golden haze;
Sweet as the breath of rose-crowned June,
As she sighs and sings her plaintive rune,
And ever dreams of that vanished day
That took from her side her Lord of May.
But who can read the pure thoughts that rise
Like incense unto the starlit skies—
Like perfume from an opening rose?
Ah! only God; He both hears and knows.

ONE TOUCH OF NATURE.

'Twas an Assembly of learned people,
Very wise in its Country's needs,
Discussing circles and schisms
And most great historic deeds.

One could scarcely wait for another;
Each had "theories" of his own,
And burned to introduce them—
To make his ideas known.

They were men deeply read and knowing,
And women with scholarly grace;
While, dotted about among them,
Were Nuns, each with hooded face.

There was, too, among the Assembly
A wee baby, with great brown eyes;
But few had noted its presence,
They being so wond'rous wise.

Until, when the debate was hottest
(And less intelligent, maybe),
A tiny voice rang through the room,
Chirping most plainly, "Baby."

The young mother sought to silence it
With full many small offerings,
Flushing the while with annoyance,
As the tiny voice still rings.

Many faces are turned toward them
To see the sturdy speaker, small;
Then smile, and one touch of Nature
Predominates over all.

For silence falls o'er the Assembly
(Welcome to some of us, maybe),
All listening to one tiny voice
And flutelike question, "Baby?"

The little one sees but its mother;
It speaks but for her, 'tis plain;
With sparkling eyes and laughing lips
It chirrups its one refrain.

One sad-browed Nun lifts her drooping face
And listens, with wistful eyes,
Unto the tiny, chirping voice
That silenced the speakers wise.

A smile illumines her saddened face,
As her eye meets the parent's glance,
And starts them wondering if her life
Had e'er held a sweet romance—

If, perchance, the prattle of a child,
For e'en ever so brief a time,
Had filled her life with melody,
With sweetly discordant chime?

And what the pitiful mystery,
Sadly locked in her silent breast,
That drove her from the outside world
To seek in the convent—rest?

Whate'er her story, what her great need,
The sweet voice of a little child
Touched some chord in her distant past
And brought to her face so mild

An intense longing and mother-love.
Some dream from the dead past, maybe,
Was 'wakened from a long, long sleep
By the voice of a prattling baby.

The Assembly resumed its wonted sway,
Half ashamed to be thus beguiled,
But the sad-faced Nun had attention,
Just for the prattling of a child.

BEAUTIFUL HANDS.

Such beautiful hands—let me touch them!
  They are beautiful, slender and long,
And gracefully slow of movement,
  Yet quick to resent a wrong.

To resent a wrong to one weaker
  Are these beautiful hands then strong.
O beautiful hands, your beauty
  Well deserves a long life in song!

GRANDFATHER'S FAVORITES.

Come cull the flowers by the wayside here,
And a garland weave of these beauties sweet;
Inhale their fragrance, dew-washed and clear.
Ah! no hothouse queens can with them compete!

These dear wayside blows, growing free and wild,
Have old-time odors that sparkle like wine
Through my aging veins. Here! come quickly, child;
Cull a spray of that fragrant eglantine.

Ah! the mem'ries its spicy ordors bring!
And there are "Sweet Williams"; my Beth, be fleet!
All friends of my life in its gladsome spring.
Here are violets nestling at our feet.

See! there is a bush of the sweet wild rose—
O gather an armful, and some to spare!
How the dainty dye in the sunlight glows!
No hothouse flowers are e'en half so fair.

Ah! there are the dogwoods, like milk-white doves;
I must have a spray of those old friends, too—
Friends? Nay, little one, they are all old loves!
There, pluck those clover blooms, dripping with dew.

Look! what a wealth of fragrant beauties there,
Culled by the wayside, despised by some!
Let me dream, while you weave your garland fair,
Of glad olden days and the life to come.

As I close my eyes their odorous breath
Wafts me away, as on pinions of love.
When the Messenger comes, the grewsome Death,
Give me wayside flowers to bear above.

THE TEAR IN THE ROSE.

My own lover brought me a red, red rose,
Fresh from the garden, one late fall day,
After frosts had come and tinted the trees,
And the leaves were circling fast away.

He saw it gleaming red over the wall,
Like blood from the veins of the dying year;
And, as he placed it on my throbbing breast,
I saw in the heart of the rose a tear.

A tear in the heart of a red, red rose—
A red rose, the symbol of fervid love—
But its mates were gone from the gardens here,
And a gray, cheerless sky bent above.

Why commingle these signs of grief and love?
Why a tear in the sweet red rose's heart?
Ah, me! 'tis said that sad, tear-stained Grief
And her sister, Love, are not far apart.

My red rose came freighted with love to me,
And whispered it low in my heart that morn;
But sad-eyed Grief, too, came all unseen,
For, ah! my rose had a hidden thorn.

AN ECHO LOVER.

An Echo used to hide among
  The hills, near the old rooftree,
And oft we wakened it from sleep,
  And it answered in childish glee
Our every shout of merriment,
  In the dear days of Used-to-be.

But many years have passed away
  Since I stood 'neath the old rooftree
And shelter sought beneath its boughs,
  As in the dear Used-to-be,
When I sought its wide protecting shade
  In the sweetest security.

I know the home-nest is waiting;
  That the old rooftree still stands
And reaches out beseeching arms
  To the wanderer in other lands,
And that it waves a welcome
  With its many leafy hands.

But I wonder if the Echo,
  That used to hide behind the hill,
Will give the wanderer greeting
  And cry again, "I love you still,"
As it used to in those old days
  From its haunt behind the hill?

Or will I just find it missing,
As I many dear things will,
Far dearer than an Echo
Upon a woodland hill?
Yet I'll hunger for the Echo-voice,
Whose memory haunts me still.

And, should I try to find it,
To waken it, if asleep,
Would I find the satisfaction
That o'er me used to creep,
As I, when a child, talked with it
Upon the old wooded steep?

It may be the memory's sweetest;
I might find it changed with years—
Find its voice harsh and broken,
Or a-tremble, as with tears;
For the Echo may have changed as I
In the intervening years.

So let my Echo sleep its sleep
In its haunt behind the hill,
If so it should be resting,
And so, I hope, it will;
For I shall soon be sleeping mine,
In the churchyard, calm and still.

AMERICA.

Strangers they were, each in a stranger land;
Strangers they stood upon a foreign strand.
Each wrote one word upon the shining sand—
"America," that name so bold, so grand!

Strangers, are they? Ah, no; that magic name
Draws each to each—dear land from whence they
came;
No North, South, nor West; 'tis "Home," without
blame—
"America," with magic in its name.

Strangers? Ah, no! See hand clasped unto hand;
Glad greetings given, smilingly they stand,
Linked by one word upon the shining strand—
"America," that name so bold, so grand!

NOURMA LEIGH.

I wonder of what she's dreaming,
  My beautiful Nourma Leigh?
With idle hands clasped 'neath her head,
  All lost in a daydream, she
Stares at the bended sky above,
  Yet not seeing it, I know,
Nor yet the nodding lilacs,
  That perfumed kisses throw.

I'm jealous of the azure sky,
  O beautiful Nourma Leigh!
Turn now your gaze back unto earth
  And list to a lover's plea.
I'm jealous of the gentle breeze
  That toys with your silken hair;
I'm jealous of the yellow sun
  That sifts a radiance there.

Awake from thy dreaming, Nourma,
My beautiful Nourma Leigh,
And down yon beech-boled peristyle
Go hand in hand with me,
Unto our olden trysting-place,
Just beside the silent mere,
Where dips the plumy bracken
Into its waters clear;

Where sings the thrush and wood-bird,
And where cooes the nesting dove,
And let me tell you o'er and o'er
The one story of my love.
O put your trusting hand in mine,
My beautiful Nourma Leigh,
And let us drift through endless time
Upon a lovelit sea.

Upon a lovelit sea, Nourma,
Begirt with sunny skies,
And I will guide our shallop
By the love light in your eyes.
O love shall be our guiding star,
My beautiful Nourma Leigh,
As we glide singing on our way
Upon a lovelit sea!

TALKING IN SLEEP.

Late in the night, from neighboring tree,
A little bird sang out merrily;
A murmuring "Hush!" was wafted me—
The birdling talked in its sleep, you see.

I, too, heard a lambkin quickly cry,
Out in an orchard old, hard-by;
The mother answered, and then a sigh—
"Her baby talked in its sleep," smiled I.

My babe sobbed, "Mamma!" soft and low;
I patted and soothed him, so, and so;
Ah, now he rests where the lilies grow—
He only talked in his sleep, you know.

Who'll soothe and cuddle him back to sleep,
If now in the night he wakes and weeps,
When only the lilies vigil keep?
Ah! who'll know if he talks in his sleep?

COME LISTEN TO MY WOOING.

O the blackbird sings in the beechwood,
And it's time for the cooing dove;
There's green in the trees and spring in the breeze;
Come listen to my wooing, love.

The brooklet is wooed by the willows;
See it reach forth its arms above,
And this its plea, as the coy waters flee:
"Come listen to my wooing, love."

Come list to the voices of springtime;
See the bright azure sky above.
As the sky is blue, so my heart is true;
Come listen to my wooing, love.

O come to the heart that awaits thee,
Now, the time of the cooing dove,
With love in the air and joy everywhere;
Come listen to my wooing, love.

AT THE RACES.

A scarlet geranium lay in our path,
  Like gorgeous crest of tropic bird;
You rescued it from hurrying feet,
  With gay, "Look here! Upon my word!"
Then tenderly freed it from cloying dust
  And carefully put it away;
But the words, if aught came, were lost,
  For then the band began to play.

We had been watching the races, you mind,
  On that beautiful August day?
Had been cheering the panting coursers,
  As they chased the miles away,
Till the world, our world, lay all behind them,
  And we, but a part of the whole,
Faded away in the distance,
  Like the words on a mighty scroll.

Again, again, the steeds flitted 'fore us
  On the race-course so hard and white,
Nor gave over the heated contest
  Till warned by the coming night.
Restful night, with its deepening shadows,
  The night, with its stillness profound;
Through all the din and confusion
  Came gay songs of the homeward-bound.

We wandered home with lingering steps,
  'Neath the rays of the setting sun;
You gave me the flower at the gate,
  And the play, with the day, was done.
Is the race-course an emblem of our life,
  As it stretches there hard and white,
O'erlaced with darkening shadows,
  Far-reaching, e'en into the night?

Are our lives to be widely separate,
  Each one striving to reach a goal;
Yes, striving, and thirsting, and panting,
  All to sate a hungering soul?
And is this the end of the dream, dear?
  O those dreams! how fair they can be!
'Twas my heart's blood glowing at your feet,
  And you gave it back to me.

THE BLUE AND THE GRAY.

There's a page in memory's volume
That tells of one sweet summer day
I spent in the old, old schoolroom,
When a lad "spoke" "The Blue and Gray."

And I gladly take up the volume,
And read o'er this page, ever fair,
That brings back again dear Jamie,
Little Jim, with sun-tinted hair.

And I see once again in fancy
The sad eyes, the dreamy child-face,
As he told the olden story,
While gazing afar into space.

We felt he was seeing the conflict,
Heard the battle's deafening noise;
Saw, among the dead and wounded,
Those two poor dying soldier boys.

And felt he was given the last words
  Of those two, the "Blue and the Gray,"
To bear to the stricken dear ones
  In the longed-for homes far away.

And could he have taken each message,
  Fresh from the ones as 'twas given,
The pitying eyes and sweet face
  Would have soothed hearts sadly riven.

Dear Jamie, he, too, fought a battle
  For his own young life, fresh and fair,
But Death was the silent victor
  O'er our laddie with sun-kissed hair.

POPPIES.

The poppies in their grey-green dress,
Stately and tall,
Blushing at their great loveliness
Nigh the grim wall,
Sift their silken petals down
Silently upon the ground,
A crimson pall.

All dreamily I watch them fall
Silently down,
Blood-drops from hearts of poppies tall,
Drip without sound.
Ah! ye were born but to bless;
Dear poppies in grey-green dress,
All praise abound.

Ah! lotus blows in grey-green dress,
Nigh the grim wall,
Art born to soothe bruis'd man's distress,
Bruised by his fall.
Breathe your mystic odors 'round;
Send sleep where sad hearts abound;
Send rest to all.

"SLEEP, O SLEEP."

'Neath a gnarled old tree, whose spreading boughs
  Reach protectingly far and wide,
In a churchyard old, our early dead
  Now are sleeping side by side,
While over their slumber the night winds sweep,
Breathing their lullaby,
  "Sleep, O sleep."

We scatter vale lilies about their beds,
  And "Sweets unto the sweet," we say;
But the flower faces that sleep below
  Are sweeter by far than they.
And over their slumbers the lilies weep,
Bidding our little ones,
  "Sleep, O sleep."

Kindly listen, gnarled old tree;
  Spread your sheltering branches far
And protect our sleeping babes;
  Guard them closely, brilliant star!
And lilies, bending low, a patient vigil keep,
While the night winds softly blow thus:
  "Sleep, O sleep."

DANDELION GOLD.

What flowers were missed from the garland
We culled yesterday, little one?
Just look 'mong the grasses at your feet;
Ar'n't those broken bits of the glad June sun?

How could we have missed these nodding heads?
Come, gather them now for "auld lang syne."
Mint of my youth, how the years have flown
Since I garnered gold of the "dandeline!"

I gathered my riches day after day,
And a purer gold no man e'er had;
Washed and cradled on dewy plains,
Its memory maketh my old heart glad.

O I was a banker then, too, my child,
And my "bank" was near a winding stream;
I drew from its stores with lavish hand,
And lived o'er and o'er a sweet daydream,

Where I wandered far in foreign lands.
O the wonderful journeys I made,
And the sights I saw, and treasures bought,
And, ah, me! the wonderful plans I laid!

Dear heart, the gold that came later on
Ne'er bought the joy of those childish hours,
When I drew from my bank my gleaming gold
And bought the world with dandelion flow'rs.

So pluck a handful for old-time's sake;
Let me count this gold so tried and true;
Let me once again those journeys make
To Wonderland, dear, as I used to do.

A DREAM.

I had a dream, that was *all* a dream;
One that came in the dead hour of night;
Out of the heart of a soulless sleep
There burst forth a vision bright.
O give me the pen of poet tried,
A brush, and the artist's true grace,
And let me portray with infinite skill
My dream, that was only a face.

A face so pure, so Heavenly sweet,
With such infinite beauty rife,
That to my startled dreaming eyes
It seemed blooming into life.
Wond'ring, I gazed at the vision fair;
Aye, 'twas a dream within a dream
That held my enraptured fancy there,
Till I trembled beneath its gleam.

A smile rippled 'cross the divine face
That was formed of my midnight dream,
As zephyrs dimple the surface smooth
Of a sleeping woodland stream.
Then brighter it grew, and brighter still,
Till it passed into rays of light,
And I wakened to find it all a dream—
But a vision, born of the night.

THE TWINS.

One tiny twin grew tired,
  Ere one short day was done,
And left its mate and brother
  To journey on alone.

To fight life's battle singly,
  Poor little twin thus left!
To face alone life's conflict
  That ends at last in death.

But, should he battle bravely,
  And conquer in the strife,
Then death were but transition
  Unto eternal life.

OLD LETTERS.

Old letters! But how can I burn them?
  They are part of the beautiful past—
Of the past, and my youth's glad summer,
  All, all too beautiful to last.

Old letters! But how can I burn them,
  Even though those glad days are no more,
And the writers, like youth's summers,
  Have passed to the echoless shore?

Old letters, and all sad reminders
  Of glad days that once were, but are gone
To the past, while the misty future
  I but liken to hazy dawn.

Ah! I'll look once more at their contents,
  That I once lingered over with zest,
And live once again in that glad time,
  When the world was in gala dress.

See, some speak of hopes for the future,
And some tell of great joy drawing near,
While some bend beneath weary burdens
That are dragging them to the bier.

This one mourns the death of a lover,
And this tells of a little new life,
While this tells of balls, routs, and parties,
And this asks me to be a wife.

In this one from a little nephew
I e'en pose as a most "lovely Ant,"
And it tells of a coming birthday,
And hints of wishes one might grant.

This pack, see, is all from a schoolboy—
Just a boy in his glad hopeful teens;
The world lies unconquered before him,
But to vanquish it full well he means.

Dear laddie, with trite schoolboy phrases,
He is winning his spurs of pure gold,
Bravely breasting life's rolling river
With strong, steady purpose and bold.

And this from the busy attorney,
Noisy courtroom, and rose-crowned June;
All commingled are work and duty
With the lilt of an old love tune.

This is full of neighborhood gossip;
It is newsy, and breezy, and bold;
And I smile as I note its writer,
With a large heart, and good as gold.

One who knows what will please the absent,
With sore longing for home-tie and friend;
While in this one the sad and comic,
Yes, most pathetically blend.

This one should be black 'round its border,
For it tells of a sad, wasted life;
While this is the bright, happy gushing
Of a sweet, newly-wedded wife.

This, from an erratic bachelor,
Pleads thus: "Just for a little love,"
While this one, with a pious finger,
Points to a better land above.

And this one, from the speculator,
I glance over once more, but with pain,
And then toss it aside, impatient
With its fierce thirst and greed for gain.

Here is one from an old schoolmaster,
And he cites me unto "higher things";
Yes, urges me onward and upward
To the reward that great deeds bring.

He has long since gone to his reward,
The old master, with time-powdered hair,
And I scan the clean-written pages
That are still more than "passing fair."

This one's from the musical dreamer,
And his beautiful thoughts here run rife,
With the soft rythm and flow of music,
All as pure as his own clean life.

See, this one, from a merry schoolgirl,
Whose gay youth had but few tears to show;
But she sobbed herself to the churchyard,
Ah, full many long years ago.

And so I might read on and linger
Over the missives that yet remain,
But my heart and eyes are a-weary
With tears and a deep, grievous pain,

For I'm hungrily realizing
Just how many are gone on before,
And how few of my mates are left me now,
Upon this, the nether, shore.

Old letters! Yet how can I burn them—
They, a part of the beautiful past—
Of the past, and my youth's glad summer,
All, all too beautiful to last?

Old letters, part of the dear dead past;
All fond tokens from heart unto heart!
Mine be the hand to bury my dead,
To here act the despoiler's part.

Old letters! A part of my lost youth—
Yes, a part of the dear Used-to-be!
As I heap them on the coals I find
Just how dear they are unto me.

A SONG OF JUNE.

O sing me a song of June, Lisette—
  O sing me a song of June!
Sing of that season, blithe and gay,
  When the world with love's aswoon.

Sing me a song of roses, Lisette,
  Of roses yellow and red;
Sing me a song all glad and gay,
  With June sunshine overhead.

O sing me a song of love, Lisette,
  Of love and the world aswoon;
And as you sing your roundelay
  I will crown you Queen of June.

O I'll crown you Queen of June, Lisette,
  Of June, and of Hearts, beside;
And deck your brow with roses white
  On the day you are my bride.

For no sweeter rose than you, Lisette,
  Did glad June-time ever bring;
With your fond heart to light the way,
  Life will be eternal spring.

AT THE CEMETERY GATES.

O open, ye gates, and let us in—
We who are bearing the little white babe!
The little white babe in her snowy dress,
The little white babe in her dainty nest,
See, with creamy roses upon her breast;
Ope' wide your portals and let us in!

Why stay our progress, ye oaken bars?
O ope' wide your portals and let us in!
We bring our dear one to sleep 'neath the stars—
Bring her home from this world of sin.

We would have kept her, but Death said, "No;
The harvest is ready, my sickle keen."
And he swept the grain at one fell blow
And our flowret, that "grew between."

The flower is broken, its fragrance gone,
And we fain would plant it in sacred soil—
In Mother Earth's bosom, to 'wait the dawn
That's to follow this life's turmoil.

O ope', golden gates, and let them in—
Angels home-bearing the little white babe!
The pure angel babe in her shining dress,
The dear birdling flown from her dainty nest,
A flowret to bloom on the Savior's breast;
Ope' your gold portals and let them in!

MYSTERIES.

This world is full of mysteries,
From the whisp'ring leaves upon the trees
  That nod and bend and chatter still,
  From stony, barren, "rock-ribbed hill,"
To the sleeping babe upon my knees,
'Tis crowded full of mysteries.

The seasons come, the seasons go,
The soft breezes blow, and blow, and blow;
  The crystal brook goes lisping still,
  And wanders wheresoe'er it will;
But whence they come, or just where they go,
O where is he who claims to know?

WRAITH OF THE HOME-HUNGRY.

A wraith visited the homestead
  Christ's Eve, when the lights burned dim,
And viewed the Christmas offerings—
  Saw a tree, with bedecked limbs;
One 'twas bearing most strange fruitage,
  Or, 'twould be strange at other times,
But on this night of all others
  This tree bears in many climes.

And the wraith, too, viewed the stockings
  That were draped from mantel tall,
Of varied shades and colors,
  Many sizes, large and small;
And the shapes! well, on this night, too,
  The hosiery, like the tree,
Has many strange contortions,
  O most wonderful to see!

And it touched with loving finger,
  Then, each heart-warm offering.
Say, did ye not hear one tinkle,
  Nay, nor rustle, nor yet ring,
From garnered toy and parcel,
  As 'twere touched by spirit hand
Of the absent and home-hungry
  In distant stranger land?

Then it breathed above loved sleepers
  Benedictions on each head;
E'en stooped to pat the little dog,
  Snugly nestling in his bed;
Yes, e'en wafted to the kitchen
  And "keeked" in the cupboard old,
Rich with many hoarded dainties,
  And its pumpkin pies of gold.

And it reveled in the home-warmth,
  And the genial Christmas cheer;
Aye, it reveled as a wraith may
  On this one night of the year,
When 'tis sent by the heart-hungry
  Back unto the homestead old,
So rife with fond heart-holdings
  That cannot be bought with gold.

AT FOUR YEARS OLD.

Near a broad "fireplace,"
With flames leaping high,
Sits a wee maiden,
With wide dreamy eye.

A tiny maiden,
With soft dusky hair,
All prim and demure,
In small rocking chair.

O dear! can't you see
That she's just been told
This is her birthday,
And she four years old?

She smoothes her apron,
And stares at her toes,
And wonders if all
In the big world knows

How old she now is?
O this great, great day!
She will never more,
No, never, will play!

Study the child-face;
O cannot you see
Four years are very
Much greater than three?

Wee grave-faced maid,
In your tiny chair,
Grave thoughts are working
Beneath your dark hair.

Life's a sad problem,
So we are oft told;
Don't try to solve it
Now, at four years old.

THE SLUMBERING EARTH.

[The Snow and Electric Storm of February, 1901.]

One night the gentle Earth lay down to slumber,
And drew a snow-fleeced covering o'er her breast;
Aye, even o'er her face she drew this cover,
Then, gently, sweetly drowsed away to rest.

Anon arose the laughing Moon beside her,
Saw the pale face and whitely shrouded form,
Then hid her own and cried aloud to Heaven
That their loved Earth had come to grievous harm.

Heav'n bent above her child in tender pity,
Scarce seeing her in that dim, darkling light,
Then flashed, and flashed o'er her her lightning;
Still slept she on beneath her coverings white,

Then shook they the dread thunderbolts of Heaven!
Still flash'd its lightning in her sleeping face!
Still slept she on, unmoved, unawaking,
'Neath her white robe, with calm and peaceful grace.

Then dashed they waters on her pallid brow—
Dashed rain, from the deep cloud-wells up above—
Still slept she on, unmindful of their pity,
Unheeding yet their minist'rings of love.

Thus mourning, Heaven bent o'er her in sorrow,
And wept with pity for her prostrate child.
Lo! when the morn broke forth in greatest grandeur,
Earth raised her brown face up to it and smiled.

BIRDS OF THE BEECHWOOD.

Birds of the beechwood, singing so blithely,
Birds of the beechwood, happy and gay,
Raising your voices in pæans of gladness,
Greeting the dawn with a glad roundelay.

I hear ye singing, birds of the beechwood—
I hear your glad song, though far, far away;
It in my heart lives, a hallowed memory,
Sweet and inviting, from day unto day.

Birds of the beechwood, sing on, and ever;
Lift your dear voices in glad roundelays—
Lift your glad voices in sweet rejoicing
Up to your Maker in pæans of praise.

COME TO ME, LOVE.

Come, dear, to me; so long has been the waiting;
So long my heart has called for thee in vain.
O when your kiss was given me that even,
Did you not mean to come to me again?

Did you not mean to come and sit beside me,
To fold your white wings and be my heart's own mate?
I called you such, and you did not chide me.
Come! for the night is growing dark and late.

I need thee so to still the heart's complaining;
I need thee, love, my soul's hunger to appease.
Come! for the cup you filled with love so brimming,
Without thee is but bitter, bitter lees.

Do you forget the hours we spent together—
O love-pointed darts from out the sheath of time!—
Forget those hours among the wind-blown heather,
The waves sobbing low their sad, plaintive rhyme?

I wait thee now where long ago we parted;
Wait, as of old, at the loved trysting-place;
Wait, while my heart is hungering to greet thee;
Wait once again to meet thee face to face.

Then never more will our lives be sundered—
Never again to be parted until death—
For when your days and your hours are numbered,
My soul will rise with your departing breath.

THE OLD PLAYGROUND.

Just now I crossed the playground,
Where the village school once stood;
'Twas a tiny pieced frame building,
Backed by a beechen wood.
The "graveyard" then lay near it,
With its few stones white and gray,
Just like a flock of pigeons
Resting at the close of day.

But, ah! the school is swept away,
And so is the beech grove, quite;
While marble spires mark where the dead
Have long crept across their site.
The many dead, the peaceful dead,
Who in life romped here with zest,
Comrades of my own glad youth,
That have come back here to rest.
And strangers, too, find resting-place—
Aye, e'en my own flesh and blood—
Two tiny buds I've planted here,
In this "acre" given to God.

Here runs the creek. I'll cross again.
It is wider than of yore.
Where I just crossed on rocky bed
I've oft sprung from shore to shore.

Just here a "dam" was thrown across;
'Twas the work of many hands.
Here hung the giddy water-wheel—
Aye, its architect still plans
And executes, 'mid belts and wheels,
Great fires and 'scaping steam,
And gives to man in perfect form
Full many a childish dream.

I gaze a-down the winding creek—
Yes, unto the "swimming hole";
The stream runs through a pasture now;
Then trees spread from knoll to knoll,
And to my child-eyes it was then
A dim forest vast and wide,
Where lurking horrors of all kind
O most easily might hide.

Here stood the "fort." I close my eyes,
And again the missiles fly
In mimic warfare at our foes,
And at times at passersby.
How many battles here were fought,
And how many foemen fell!
Many then boys to their sons now
Can tales of past valor tell.

There once an old log "meeting house"
Stood on yonder grassy rise;
'Twas there our grandsires found the path
Unto "mansions in the skies."
Long years have seen this landmark gone.
'Tis a part of life's sad play
That sacred things are swept aside
Thus by thoughtless hands and gay.

Dismantled its poor rival stands,
All its pristine beauty fled.
Ah, sacred should its walls be held
For the shelter given our dead!
But just beyond the grey-green boughs
Of yon hoary beechen tree
Another tapering church spire points
To a vast Eternity.

And so the foot of Time speeds on
In its never-pausing flight.
Just the dead have crept across
The old, old schoolroom's site.
And many things are swept away,
O full many hearts grown cold,
Since the old schoolroom in its prime
Stood beneath the beech trees old.

THE TREACHEROUS SEA.

What have I lost by the seashore to-day—
  Lost here by the deep blue sea?
I cannot wrest myself from its spell away,
  For it has stolen my heart from me.
And the waves, the waves, O the greedy waves!
They have hidden it deep in ocean's caves
  From me.

I was watching them as they rose and fell
  When they lured my heart away,
And it sailed abroad in a silver shell,
  To disappear with the dying day.
O I cannot leave you, treacherous sea,
Unless you return my lone heart to me
  To-day.

O where have you hidden it, say, and when—
My heart, my own treasure trove?
Is it viewed alike by mermaids and men,
As a waif from the cold world above?
Then give it back to me, maiden and boy;
For the merman bold 'tis no fitting toy
To love.

Why covet my heart, O thou dimpling sea?
O why leave me thus to mourn,
When your treasures are countless, and grand, and free,
While from me you my all now have torn?
Then bring back my heart to me, bright sea waves;
'Tis no fitting gem your resounding caves
To adorn.

"GOOD MORNING."

[To the Memory of J. H. E.]

Our erstwhile neighbor John
Fell asleep one winter morn,
And the angels call'd, in cheery voice, "Good morning!"
As they wakened him from sleep
To partake of joys they keep
Beyond the veil, for Heaven's own adorning.

Lo! his foibles fell away
Before the glorious day
That here dawned upon his vision, O so fair!
'Twas Heaven's own searchlight,
Turn'd upon him in its might,
And it cast a radiance o'er his silver hair.

A radiance sublime,
That neither chance nor time
Can displace; for in its working all complete
His kindly heart shone through,
And they found it leal and true!
And the Master cried: "Come, rest here at my feet!"

"WHEN FULLEST SPEECH IS SILENCE."

O their "fullest speech is silence,"
As, with hand clasped unto hand,
Out beneath the throbbing stars
All silently they stand;
Unmindful of a future,
Full of life crafts tempest toss'd,
Their fullest speech is silence,
And they're in the present lost.

O their fullest speech is silence,
And why give it, then, a voice,
While loving heart speaks unto heart
In language of its choice?
What need for further utt'rance,
When hearts are full of love?
Then "fullest speech is silence,"
Down wafted from above.

TURKEY PEAS.

You say 'tis "too early to gather flowers,"
As you walk in the wood to-day with me.
Just look, Beth, among the leaves at your feet;
There's the dainty bloom of the turkey pea.
Gather it carefully; 'tis very frail;
Its ball of bloom could hide beneath your thumb;
Note its dainty blow and its faint perfume;
Of all spring flowers this is first to come.
Hark! to that shout upon the breeze!
There, down on their knees,
Among the old trees,
Those children are searching for "turkey peas!"

How oft have I hunted them when a child,
Out in the wildwood, and down by the stream!
Ah! those happy days, now so long gone by,
Seem but misty wraiths of a sweet daydream!

Come, let us look for the turkey pea,
For its tiny bulb, deep down in the mould.
Beth, it has a juicy, succulent root—
Or it used to have, in those days of old.
Here is one; now brush 'way the leaves,
Then down on our knees,
Among the old trees,
We, too, child, will search for the "turkey peas."

You ask what those children will do with them?
Why, eat them! What will not a boy devour?
All things are grists that come unto his mill;
He prizes the roots—knows them by their flower.
They are reaping a harvest by yon stream,
By the shouts that echo the woodland through,
And it finishes thus, an old-time dream;
'Tis but boyish laughter, my Beth, to you.
But come, my child; brush 'way the leaves!
Here, down on our knees,
Among the beech trees,
We are searching, you know, for turkey peas.

I should like to try them, for old-time's sake,
To see if their flavor is with them still.
Look carefully, Beth; 'tis a tiny thing
That would scarcely your dainty thimble fill.

There it is, and how familiar its look!
And I have not seen one for three-score years!
Now for its taste. Have we made a mistake?
The flavor of this seems mixed with tears.
Try one, child, then smooth back the leaves.
Ah! how cold the breeze,
'Mong the naked trees!
We will leave to the lads the turkey peas.

OUR BABY'S BED.

We made our baby's cradle bed,
With downy pillows and dainty spread,
And whispered o'er the wee brown head,
That into our lives such radiance shed,
While heart spoke to heart in wordless joy,
As we caressed our winsome toy,
Our dainty, blue-eyed, baby boy.

Again we made our baby's bed
Of mossy turf, and over it spread
Vale lilies, whose sweet fragrance fled,
As our tears fell fast for our early dead,
And our hearts spoke on, bereft of joy,
Grieving each for its broken toy,
For our winsome child, our baby boy.

PANSIES.

Dear little pansy blows,
Growing so modestly,
Turning bright faces
  Up unto the sun;
Nodding so cheerily
To all who behold them,
E'en though the day may be
  All darkly begun.

Teach me thy secret charms,
Dear little pansy blows,
Dear little heartsease,
  God-given flower;
Teach me to smile instead
All the heart-pain away,
To e'er a fragrance shed,
  Though storm-clouds lower.

THE "PASSING" OF THREE VETERANS.

[To the Memory of R. B.]

The head of generations five
  Grew weary and footsore
With carrying his weight of years,
  That numbered past fourscore.

Fourscore and six—aye, full of years,
  The Grandsire, old and gray,
Tired, laid him down to rest
  And 'wait the "Eternal Day."

The waning Year, and Century—
  Aye, they were weary, too,
And waited for the bells to ring
  "Out the old and in the new."

Poor tired ones, waiting for the same
  Mandate, "All is well,"
Listening, listening, wearily,
  Heard they but one "passing bell."

Aye, heard alike that promised call,
"Ye that are weary, come!"
They tottered to the grave's wide brink,
And the New Year bore them home.

The Grandsire gray, the poor Old Year,
The decrepit Century,
Together crossed death's rolling flood
To a bright Eternity.

Together found that longed-for rest,
With "life's fitful fever o'er";
Together went to their reward
Upon that "other shore."

DECEMBER AND MAY.

What is it she sees, this lassie of mine,
That she's gazing into the spring sunshine?
Why is she perched on the window ledge,
Where the sunshine rests like a golden wedge?
Why easel deserted, with sketch begun?
Has she left it to bask in the warm spring sun?

Nay, the busy hands both are restless still;
This I see as they grasp the window sill.
And a different look's in the laughing eyes,
For they are gazing now in pleased surprise
Out upon some object beyond my view;
So I turn and stare from the window, too.

And spread out before lies a garden old,
With its shadows dim, and unbroken mould,
And blooming cherry trees, one, two and three;
While in the corner, there, a gnarled pear tree
Sifts down its petals, all snowy and white.
Is she watching them gleam in the warm sunlight?

This question I ask of the maiden fair—
My coy maiden, with dusky, wind-blown hair—
But a whispered "Hush!" is her one reply,
As she points where the pear blows deepest lie.
Then I well understand her dearth of words,
For behold I a group of wee snowbirds.

Snowbirds as busy as busy can be,
Where the petals drift 'neath the old pear tree.
As I look my wonder then knows no bound,
For nowhere in sight can these birds be found,
Except where the flowers fall pure and free
From the laden boughs of the old pear tree.

Ah! why are these creatures of winter here
In the first flush of the 'wakening year?
For the grass is green on the spreading lawn,
And flowers are bursting from shrub and thorn,
While the air is filled with the song of birds,
And though they are "melodies without words."

Methinks I hear from yon gay robin, now,
That quavers and trills on the cherry bough,
How he's telling of revels past and gone,
And hinting at joys that are sure to come,
When Nature's vaults are all opened free
And her wines gleam red in the cherry tree.

He tells how her blood oft flows at his will;
Ah! you can see its stains on his red breast still!
But he belongs here, now, to rose-crowned June,
Also to August's heat, the year's "high noon,"
While these dusky mites 'mong the drifting blows
Are a part of old Winter's frost and snows.

And to see them in this flower-decked land,
It is Summer and Winter, hand in hand.
The pear blows drift over the snowbirds still,
And the lass leans yet on the window sill;
While I, dreaming, bask in the soft spring breeze
And ponder o'er Nature's great mysteries.

For my hair is white as the Winter's snows,
And in the lassie's cheek is youth's June rose.
My life's past the full, and her's just begun;
Her glass just turned; my sands nearly run;
Yet this maiden, fair as the storied Ruth,
I love with a love far surpassing youth.

And fast in the web of my waning life
Is the heart of my trusting girlish wife;
And, as I watch the sunflecks o'er her play,
Methinks 'tis again December and May.
December and May! Age linked with youth!
'Tis Winter and Summer again, in truth.

Snowbirds in springtime 'mong drifting pear blows,
Maidenhood linked with a life near its close.
'Tis a strange picture presented to me.
High lights, and rose-pink, and grey tints I see
Commingled together; each to each cling—
I'm lost in these parables of Winter and Spring.

THE OLD CLOCK.

Yon stands an old wall-sweeper,
With its ever-pointing hands;
Thus pointing fore and after,
Ever beckoning, it stands.

It beckons on the future,
And it points to time long past,
While its clear bell calls the hours
That so swiftly glide and fast.

To some its voice speaks kindly,
And to some it heralds doom;
To some it calls glad welcome,
And some points unto the tomb.

How many hours and lives it tells!
O how many pathways trace,
E'en to the grave! then pitying
Stands, with hands before its face.

SAINT PETER.

'Tis a kindly old face I oft see pass my way,
And to see it at morntide, it brightens my day.
'Tis hale and 'tis hearty, and breathes forth good
cheer;
When I see it I oft feel Saint Peter is near.

That Saint's mantle fell earthward, to rest on a Hill,
And, finding a good thing, sure, it resteth there still;
And ofttimes I wonder, both early and late,
If we've 'mong us Saint Peter, or Peter the Great.

Then I feel 'tis Saint Peter, for, as that Saint above
Unlocketh the door to the vast realms of love,
So this earthly Saint Peter doth cheerily come
Unlocking the doors of our hearts and our home.

And, bidding us "All hail!" with cheeriest din,
Like God's sun in dark places, his goodness floods in,
Floods in and gladdens, aye, full many a place,
As my day is enlivened by his cheery face.

MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD.

Many pictures of my childhood
I can always plainly see,
For they are safely sheltered
In the "Halls of Memory."
But the plainest and the dearest
Is an old house, long and low,
That shelter'd the blind grandfather,
Aye, full many years ago.

It was long, and low, and rambling,
With deep nooks and crannies dear;
With dark and sunny places,
All odorous with good cheer.
And the sun ne'er seemed to set there,
Or it left an afterglow
That blazoned into glory
From the faces there, I know.

'Twas the face of the blind grandsire,
And of cheery grandame, too;
Faces to my child-eyes old,
To my child-heart ever new.
And just so I always see them,
And just so they'll ever be,
For thus I have them pictured
In the "Halls of Memory."

And they fitted in the old house,
Like quaint pictures in a frame,
And made of it a "home-nest,"
In deed, as well as name.
And they fitted with the orchard,
And the spring behind the hill,
As they fitted each the other,
And in mem'ry fitteth still.

I now see grandfather walking,
With his old mate by his side;
Can see them in the orchard,
See the horse they used to ride;
Even see the easy carriage,
An ancient "rockaway,"
With the old mates nestled therein,
Jogging slowly on their way.

Then on down into the orchard
I with the grandfather go,
A-visiting his old haunts,
All old friends he used to know.
They, his trees he used to care for,
Aye, loved them overmuch,
His quaint grafts and constructions
He "sees" growing now by touch.

Yonder leans the "thunder apple,"
Here the "summer sweetings" gleam,
A-denting down the lush grass,
Just like dimples in a stream.
Yon I see the old "shop apple,"
I can hear the hum of bees
A-drowsing in the sunshine,
Smell the bloom upon the trees.

Can yet taste the "Phinny" apple,
That grew near the eastern wall;
Can see the favorite pear tree,
That once stood so straight and tall;
And near it rests the grindstone,
There, upon its creaking frame;
And yonder is the old well,
With its curb and rattling chain.

I can see the old shop standing,
With the vines about its door,
While sunshine through the grimy panes
Cast weird shadows on the floor.
And the crucibles and fixtures
Bring e'en now an old-time chill,
While I tiptoe, as in old days,
Past the giant copper "still."

I can see again the old porch,
With its posts, a tree trunk peeled,
Where, with small hands clasped about it,
I've oft "tippy-toed" and "heeled."
And many times I've rested there
On the blind grandfather's knee,
And many a "canter" taken
To his "Prupity, prupitee."

And I see the old-time "dresser,"
Well stocked with ancient delf;
And, peeping in the pantry,
Smell the cheese upon the shelf.
I can see the high-post bedsteads,
Each with vallance falling prim;
Climb again the narrow staircase
To the seed-hung attic dim.

And I see the wide-armed rocker,
  See the windows broad and low,
Where the jasmine's tapping fingers
  Check not sunshine's inward flow;
See the old books in their cases,
  See the pictures on the walls,
Where, like a benediction,
  Lo! the yellow sunlight falls.

Now I hear the old piano,
  Wooed to speech by masterhand;
Hear it softly breathing "Greenfield,"
  And know it understands
The kind touch laid upon it—
  Fingers old, on yellow keys—
And confer they thus together
  Of when life's cup had no lees.

And it quavers like its player
  As it sings of "Auld Lang Syne";
Then, gliding to "Sweet Afton,"
  O its voice is clear and fine.
Again I hear both voice and strings—
  Player old, old instrument—
Speaking ancient melodies,
  With quavering accents blent.

And I hear the wild birds singing,
  Undisturbed in shrub and tree—
Singing softly to their nestlings,
  All in sweet security.
I can hear the cattle lowing
  By the pond and down the lane;
I can see the old sun-dial,
  Hear the creaking weather-vane.

O the old house and old faces!
  Ah! the "Halls of Memory"
Are filled to overflowing
  With treasures more than dear to me!
Thus in my mind I see them,
  And no hand can e'er efface
The memory of the old house
  And grandfather's placid face.

NATURE'S CARNIVAL TIME.

'Tis May, the floral feast of the year;
Each breeze gives a fond caress;
The orchards, holding their carnival,
Are now in their gala dress.

The locust trees bow their plumed heads,
Sweet queens of the carnival,
While the ladened bee, on nectar drunk,
Staggers off a mere golden ball.

The lilacs nodding across the way
Throw kisses with perfumed breath;
The peach trees standing in clusters, see,
Blush at their own loveliness.

The meads have carpets of greenest plush,
Tacked down by tiny flowers,
And the smiling sun looks down with pride
On this ravishing earth of ours.

Enchantress May! Most beautiful May!
Sweetest sister of the spring!
O these are the gifts she brings to us,
While hourly her bird choirs sing.

THE "CHOIR INVISIBLE."

Last night I hied from Dreamland,
And yet was not sure I had,
For, floating 'round about me,
Wafted music weird and sad.

I listened to it stealing,
As we list to sounds in dreams—
To rythm, and flow, and meter,
That oft 'round about us streams.

I pondered o'er the meaning
Of this midnight serenade,
The eerie, mystic fluting
That 'round my bedside played.

I reveled in the music,
As each cadence rose and fell,
And whispered to my awed heart,
"'Tis the 'Choir Invisible.'"

O I reveled in it truly!
I can hear its cadence yet;
And, oh, but I was thankful
I'd a good mosquito-net!

"WHEN MISTS HAVE CLEARED."

[In Memory of J. B.]

O the way was long and drear,
Stretching out full many a year,
And 'twas strewn with rocks and thorns
And grewsome places.
There was grievous discontent
With life's sweetest blessings blent—
Joy and sorrow, thorns and roses,
Dear dead faces.

Such commingling of woes
With the colors of the rose;
If one drank a sparkling cup
Its lees were sorrow;
Such a hungering for rest,
For the tried and true and "best,"
Such a longing for that promised
"Glad to-morrow,"

That the father tired grew
Of this life we're rushing through,
And from dangers manifold
Are vainly fleeing;
Now the "mists" have cleared away
From the sight and from the brain,
And his rested eyes again
Are clearly seeing.

SEA MYSTERIES AND MEMORIES.

O down by the sea, by the sad sobbing sea,
By the sea that oft smiles through its tears,
One can creep close to Nature, wild and free,
Feel her pulse-beats, her joys and fears.

O the changeless sea, and the e'er changing sea!
'Tis a problem not solved in years
How it plays thus upon humanity
With its ne'er-ending joys and fears.

O the scent of the sea, and the sight of the sea,
And the sound of the sea in my ears!
These and much more will abide with me
Throughout all life's slow-moving years.

NEAR NATURE'S HEART.

Come go a-woodsing Beth, my child,
  Down where the bluebells grow;
'Tis near a shady pool and wild,
  Where shy trout dart to and fro.

Hard by this tiny murm'ring stream
  Let's rest on its mossy bank,
And watch the eddies glint and gleam
  'Mong the flags so tall and rank.

See, there's a ghostly dragonfly
  The rushes darting a-tween!
See it quiver, then rest hard-by,
  Where the sun sifts a golden sheen.

Yon spider tiptoes 'cross the pool,
  On e'en to the farther side,
Now darts among the grasses cool
  That dip low into the tide.

'Tis a lovely spot to dream away
The happy summer hours,
And watch this tiny world at play
Among the nodding flowers;

For 'tis a world within itself,
Is this insect life we see,
That toils and has its hoarded wealth,
Yes, and losses, as do we.

I used to drowse in this same nook
Often when a tiny lad,
And read from Nature's open book—
It was all the tome I had.

But, ah! the wonders that it held
For my eager boyish eyes!
'Twas a mimic world that I beheld,
And a mimic paradise.

A mimic world, full-peopled, too,
With birds and bees and flowers,
That lived and loved, much as we do,
On this higher plane of ours.

It had its wars, its mimic chase,
Its queer intrigues and deceits,
Its clash of colors and of race,
Its forts and its safe retreats.

I've seen here judges false and just,
Have seen duels for love's sake,
Have seen the vanquished bite the dust,
Have seen homes here build and break.

Here have watch'd full many a game—
Yes, have seen them bury their dead;
Have seen some plant, and fruitage came;
Have e'en felt the tears some shed.

O the many things I've fancied,
And the love-meets here I've seen,
And the partings and romances
Upon this their "village green."

There were concerts and high masses,
Sung by insect and bird choir,
And grand anthems 'mong the grasses,
Of which I would never tire.

Oft pilgrims would a-journeying go
Along tiny shaded dells,
And, listening, I'd fancy low
Came the chime of chapel bells.

This fringed plant was the chapel.
See its chime bells hung aloft?
And, listening close, I'd hear them
Each a-ringing low and soft.

This was the part my bluebells played
In my tiny mimic world,
While oft from forts my fancy made
Many flower flags unfurled.

And some of them were flags of peace,
While some were of bloody war,
And often the dainty heartsease
Shone forth as Bethlehem's star.

To me it was enchanted land,
A small world, with beauty rife;
One that my heart could understand—
Birds and bees and rich plant life.

I lived so close to Nature's heart
That I felt each pulse-beat strong,
And loved her every change and part—
Loved her tears and glad bird-song.

I loved them as I hope you may,
Beth, my child, when I'm no more;
That you'll be tender, e'en in play,
To this world on Nature's floor.

And study from her open book,
Love her flowers, birds and bees;
As did the shy lad by the brook,
Find rare beauty in all these.

I watched it all with eager eyes,
Often by this running stream;
Have builded many a Paradise
In many a boyish dream:

That's kept my hands from cruelties
And filled my heart with love
For all small God-given creatures
'Round about us, and above.

THE GOLDEN WEDDING JUBILEE

OF

MR. AND MRS. I. T. KING.

Full fifty years, this couple here,
  Have fared along together;
Full fifty years, through storm and shine,
  Through bleak, through cloudy weather.

Though half a century's been told
  On the rosary of time,
Together, hand in hand, they go
  As when life was at its prime.

On this, their golden wedding day,
  We bring our offerings meet;
"Rewards of merit" for the two,
  And so lay them at their feet.

And wish them yet long, happy years—
  Years brimful of peace and hope—
Their pathway strewn with flow'rs of love
  As they tread life's nether slope.

Lift high your glasses! Drink to them!
  Aye, this is the toast I bring:
All good to them, all joy to them,
  And long, long live the King!

L. of C.

THE MERMAN.

A bold, saucy merman rose from the sea
And blew on a bright silver shell to me,
Shouting, "Hi! pretty maid, come live with me
In my beautiful castles 'neath the sea."

"No, no, Sir Merman," I saucily cried;
"I want not your castles beneath the tide.
I've a braw lover; I'll soon be his bride;
Our tiny cot nestles by yon cliff side."

The merman scornfully blew a shrill blast,
Crying, "Love in a cottage will not last;
Your love's a poor sailor before the mast.
Come, maid, and I'll show you my treasures vast."

My true love came caroling down to me;
I flew to his arms, my dear destiny,
And he kissed me fondly, that all might see,
While the merman sank laughing into the sea.

LAUGHERY.

O beautiful the vale that lies,
As far as eye can see,
Protected by its shelt'ring hills,
The vale of Laughery.

Thrice peaceful is this tranquil vale,
Its shelt'ring hills a-tween
Bedecked with verdure to their base—
Aye, hills of "living green."

And, laughing on its winding way,
Clear as an inland sea,
Laving the feet of shelt'ring hills,
Is historic Laughery.

Who can dream that strife e'er echoed
A-down this peaceful vale?
Yet human blood once dyed the stream—
Aye, 'tis a grewsome tale

That's handed from the distant past,
Of valor, not of shame;
How men most gallant fought and fell,
And gave this stream its name.

'Twas near where this rippling water
Kissed the Ohio's tide
That many heroes fought and fell,
And, fighting, fell and died,

Slain by redmen's fiendish arrows,
By tomahawk and spear;
To distant homes came sorrow
For loved ones that fell here.

'Twas here the gallant Laughery
Camped with his little band.
'Twas their blood dyed the water
And stained the shining sand,

Shed by foemen hid in ambush,
Waiting the barks that came
Floating inland to their fate—
And to give our creek a name.

For the stream that lies the hills a-tween,
Whose peaceful vale I see,
Was given the name of one who fell—
The gallant Laughery.

And, whether sleeping peacefully
  Or taken at full flood,
Its name has since been Laughery,
  Christened so with human blood.

And Laughery it will remain,
  Rippling its hills a-tween,
Though bloodstains are long hidden
  By fields of "living green."

A HUMMINGBIRD DUEL.

Two tiny hummingbirds, in deadly combat,
A duel fought, all for love's sweet sake.
In midair they fought, and to the finish,
And no fiercer knight did e'er javelin take,
Nor rapier, nor spear, nor broadsword,
To 'venge a wrong in ye good olden time
Than did these tiny, swift-winged lovers
I'm telling of here in my gentle rhyme.

Of what one was guilty, or which one favored,
That it remains not for my pen to tell;
But one arose and was lost in the ether,
And, fluttering downward, the other fell.
But first the battle raged long in midair:
Fierce was the conflict, shrill the war-cries;
Then rose the conqueror, glad, triumphant,
While here on my palm the conquered lies.

Poor little worker, gleaner of life's sweets,
Your cup, too, had lees, your rose a thorn;
Ne'er will you garner harvest of nectar
At fragrant eve or dew-laden morn.
Now, as you lie here still on my warm palm,
In all your beauty, with wings widespread,
Would it could warm you back to a glad life,
Back to the gardens and roses red.

REFLECTIONS.

Fitfully over my ceiling
  Float the rays from a small hand-glass,
And beautiful prismic colors
  Blaze out when the sunbeams pass.

Most gorgeous prismical colors,
  As they fitfully come and go,
Blended each unto another,
  Like bits of a broken rainbow.

Is it thus the flowers are tinted,
  As the bright sunbeams pass them by,
With bits of delicate tintings
  From the rainbow in the sky?

OVER THE HILLS.

Over the hills a laddie went,
Singing at break o' day;
But many a backward glance he sent
To the valley where the shadows blent,
Blent with the light of day;
For nestling there by babbling brook
A little brown cottage lay.

Over the hills the laddie sang,
All on a summer day,
And over the mount' his glad voice rang,
While from peak to peak the echoes sprang,
Speeding him onward, they,
To fertile plains and flow'ry dells
That waiting his coming lay.

Singing onward, heart full o' bliss,
Singing of love most bold;
Dreaming he of a heart that is his,
And dreaming, aye, of a lassie's kiss
When he whispered the story old;
Dreaming of when she'll cross with him
These hills and mountains old.

THE PONDS OF SANDBORN.

[A Day-Dream.]

Most beautiful the waterway,
  The ponds, or lakes, or moat,
That nestles nigh about our town
  And before my mind-eyes float;
Strange visions of old castles fair,
  With battlements and towers,
Protected by this silent pool,
  Bedecked with lily flowers.

And methinks this span a "drawbridge,"
  Here, thrown across the stream;
And I wander thus upon it,
  And lose myself in dreams.
Lo! the town's a lordly castle,
  And churchspires are turrets fair,
While knights and beauteous maidens
  Are strolling everywhere.

Hark! I hear the sound of singing,
And of distant "chapel bell,"
While the blithe call of the herdsman
I transpose to, "All's well!"
And my fancy is so real
'Tis a castle, not a town,
That the harsh call of a bluejay
Makes me cry to intruder, "Down!"

A wood-bird tapping on a tree,
That leans far out from shore,
Recalls the grewsome raven,
Whose theme was, "Nevermore";
For its blows break on the silence,
Then echo down the stream,
Marring the slumbrous stillness,
As it does my waking dream.

Hist! methinks it is the warning
Of enemies to Castle Hall!
And I list the cry, "Ho! Warder!"
And for portcullis fall;
For this iron span's a "drawbridge,"
Springing thus from shore to shore
Across the mystic moat that lies
Between harm and castle door.

Lo! a crane's sudden uprising
Breaks the spell again to-day;
Like a gray shade in the sunlight,
Swift, but silent, glides away;
And my castle halls fade with it,
But remains the silent stream
In all its mystic beauty,
The calm beauty of a dream.

And I watch the sunlight sifting
Where the silent waters rest,
Sleeping 'neath the sheltering trees,
With lilies on its breast.
Lo! now 'tis "Sleeping Beauty,"
Resting 'neath some magic spell
That was erstwhile laid upon it,
By whom, or when, ah, who can tell?

Nor whose the kiss to waken it
From its long, mysterious dream,
To give it life and motion
And make it thus a stream.
For no ripples ever stir its breast,
No current, nay, nor tide,
And methinks the "King o' Silence"
Must have claimed it for his bride.

HER ARMS.

There's a dame in a tiny village—
  Wife? Yes, and mother three times told.
I've not to tell of her beauty,
  Nor of locks of palest gold.

O she may have pure classic features,
  Yes, and full many other charms;
But that which so much attracts me
  Is the beauty of her arms.

They are strong, yet dimpled and lovely,
  So milk-white and lissome and long;
Fit model for Artist or Sculptor,
  Or to twine 'round a Poet's song.

With wide sleeves tuck'd in at the shoulder
  (I have a few times found her so),
Then, like turn'd and polished marble,
  They glisten and gleam like snow.

She's an earnest, hard-working woman,
  Wife, and mother of children three,
And this most surprising beauty
  Is a pure delight to see.

ECHOLAND'S PIXIE.

O hear that voice from Echoland!
Calling out, "Oh, ho! and—"
Don't you hear him where you stand,
The trixy sprite from Echoland?

He calls oft in early morning
A saucy Kelpie warning,
And then, my silence scorning—
  For I know he's watching still—
He mocks my striking clock!
Imitates the crowing cock!
Then hides behind that rock
  On the brow of yonder hill;
And shouts back at every noise,
Makes light of all my joys,
And is worse than forty boys,
  For he never gets his fill.

Just hear him shout from Echoland,
Laughing still, "Oh, ho! and—"
Don't you hear him where you stand,
My saucy sprite from Echoland?

THE OLD SPINNING-WHEEL.

Ah! here's an ancient spinning-wheel,
An old relic of the past;
It used to hum a merry song,
But its voice is hushed at last.
It used to sing most cheerily,
In ye good olden times;
Would I could fit as sweet a tune
To the meter of these lines.

Would I might spin a silken song
On this old spinning-wheel,
And clothe my brightest fancy
In it, then, from head to heel.
I would spin and then I'd weave it,
A silken warp and woof;
Weave it in the loom of Fate—
A wondrous web, in sooth.

Ah! a wondrous web, most truly!
Yes, a web of silken song,
That would shimmer down the ages,
Even to that endless dawn.
Could I but spin a silken song
On this old spinning-wheel,
I'd start the Nation singing
All the beauteous thoughts I feel.

I would sing of peace and plenty;
I would sing of home and love,
With little children's voices
Cooing through it like a dove;
And 'twould lisp a-down the ages,
And shimmer evermore;
A silken song-wave drifting
Even to that other shore.

Some hand swept the chords of memory
  This eve, and I felt each note
Across the quiet of my heart
  Like a balmy zephyr float.
And then, as I listened entranced,
  The blissful sound died away,
And I was left, with no parting glance,
  To imagination's sway.

What was it caused the golden chords
  Of "memory's harp" to thrill?
O was it some passing spirit
  That breathed o'er its wires at will?
Or was it some wild and plaintive song,
  Whose notes I can ne'er forget,
And, although the changing years roll on,
  Its sweet echo haunts me yet?

Or were they struck by dear absent hand,
  That made it of self a part—
A voice from the past, the "shadowland,"
  A call from heart unto heart?
I cannot tell, for I only know
  That at the dim twilight hour
I heard its weird, its entrancing flow,
  And am happy 'neath its power.

THE HERALDIC MESSENGER.

A tiny escutcheon came to me,
Sent by a Kingly hand,
An uncrowned King, but more worthy
Do none on this great earth stand.

I have studied the device closely;
Each minute line I trace;
Of heraldic emblem, with lone star,
And that star a sweet girl face.

An uncrowned King? Nay, most surely
As stars gleam out above,
If I read this drooping star-face right,
She has crowned him with her love.

THE OLD ORCHARD.

Beth, I see you have an apple.
Where found you that kind, child?
It has an old-time fragrance
That sets my fancy wild,

And reminds me of an orchard
Near a brick house on a hill,
And at its foot there rippled
A merry little rill.

And just there an old-time "spring-house"
Stood right midway the stream;
And, O me! the golden butter,
And, ah! the luscious cream

That coolly stood in bowls and jars
Where the dimpling water ran,
Just waiting for a chance to tempt
The appetite of man.

But I'll tell about the orchard
  Upon the hillside green;
'Twas there such apples ripened
  As now are never seen.

There hung the golden "bellflower"—
  Ah! a golden bell, indeed!—
Ringing incense down the valley
  And 'cross the flowery mead.

And "seek-no-farthers" blushing stood
  Beside the genitans prime;
No, you don't find such genitans now
  As in the olden time.

And beside the "summer sweetings"
  Stood the ruddy Taylor reds;
But the monarchs of the orchard
  Were monstrous old "cat-heads,"

With their "bumpy" skulls and brown veins
  Inward running to the core.
Give me of old-time cat-heads,
  And I'll feast forevermore.

Then the "winesaps" and the "greenings,"
  With their luscious golden meat;
And the russets, and pound pippins—
  O, Beth, 'twas such a treat

To lie on the sunny hillside,
All within this orchard old,
And feast upon its treasures there,
Ruddy-tinted, green and gold!

I wonder if those old trees stand
Yet on that sunny hill?
I wonder if the "spring-house" quaint
Still strides the rippling rill?

But, no; those trees were gnarled and old
When I, scarcely in the teens,
Used to drowse the hours away
Upon that hillside green

And feast upon such treasures there
As you, child, will never know;
For the old time-honored orchards
Have perished long ago.

MY MATE AND I.

Why am I mute when my mate is away?
The wild birds are singing, loudly and gay,
In the glad springtime,
In this gladsome May;
Why can't I sing when my mate is away?

Ah! why am I mute, now in the glad spring?
All Nature rejoices: why can't I sing?
In the bright May-time
Then sweet voices ring;
Why can't my heart rejoice, now in the spring?

I list for my mate's voice, ladened with love;
I list for its murmur, like murmuring dove;
In the blithe May-time,
The springtime of love,
I wait for his coming, like homing dove.

Then will my heart sing a glad roundelay;
Then will I rival the bird-notes of May
With my blithe singing,
All gladsome and gay,
When my mate comes to me, in the bright May.

PLAINT OF THE SPANISH GUN.

[As it Stood on the Fountain Esplanade at Cincinnati, Ohio.]

My voice once rang o'er the billows wide;
I, once the pride of the Spanish host!
See me now!—a thing to curse, deride,
With my dearly-bought prestige lost!

Prometheus-like, bound to a rock;
Here held to eat out my heart with rust!
For our vanquishers to view and mock!
Forced to lay my mouth in their dust!

O could I but raise my head again
And roar defiance down this crowded street!
Could I purge it with a leaden rain,
That revenge would be more than "sweet!"

But I, the child of a conquered host,
Vanquished, must bow my head in shame!
Must lay my mouth in the victors' dust,
Must silently bear all my pain.

THE MARCH WINDS.

'Tis a wild night, and the winds shriek
As a child might in great pain;
O believe me, it so grieves me
To hear their sad refrain.

It reminds me of life's sorrows,
Which e'er bind the great wide world;
A brotherhood 'tween bad and good,
Where sorrow's flag's unfurled.

Thus the March wind, with its wailing,
Ever sobs in plaintive strain;
And while the wind sighs my heart cries
Out with its bitter pain.

One must be smiling, though rain falls;
Be beguiling, in spite of woe;
O the heart-ache, and the heart-break!
O tears that long to flow!

THE BIRD CHORUS.

The bird people held a reunion
  One glad morning in early June;
'Twas a happy thought to hold it then,
  When the world was already in tune.
All ready for their sweet piping, aye,
  The world, like an instrument grand,
Lay waiting for the gathering throng
To touch its keys and burst into song—
  Into anthems by Nature planned.

They joyously came from far and near,
  All to meet in a beechen grove,
That swayed its banners in the breeze,
  With a green canopy up above.
With fluttering wings and joyous hearts,
  And gladsome sound-bursts of delight,
A motley, ever-increasing throng,
Whose quivering throats burst into song—
  O 'twas a wondrous sound and sight!

A wondrous sound-wave that rose to greet
The glad summer sky up above,
That seemed to be bending very near
In attitude of listening love,
When the bird choir sang its roundelay
That morning in rose-crowned June,
When spring and summer had just joined hand,
And together strolled in this fair land,
And the world was then all in tune.

Ah! the world was in tune, most truly,
And seemed bursting into love,
When each shrub and bush and gay flower
Echoed glad voices in trees above.
And, O the soul-entrancing anthem
That rose like incense that glad morn,
While dew starred o'er each shrub and vine,
Like fair jewels from some hidden mine,
All to greet the new day just born.

LEAD ME.

Could I find Him, I would follow,
But I cannot see the way;
Black darkness so surrounds me
That I weaken day by day.
Illumine, Lord, my pathway;
Let thine own searchlight flood in;
O lead me to thy fountain!
Cleanse me, Lord, from every sin!

Could I touch His cleansing garment,
Could I see His pitying face,
'Twould give me strength and courage
His bloodstained feet to trace.
But I'm fainting by the wayside,
And I cannot see the light;
O help me keep my footing!
Help me, Lord, to gain the Height!

O the way is dark and dreary,
And I'm ofttimes full of fears;
I cannot find thy pathway
For a blinding rain of tears.
Illumine thou my path, Lord;
Let me once behold the light
That radiates from thy throne above;
Help me, Lord, to gain the Height!

THE MOTHER-LOVE.

What a protection 'gainst the driving storm!
A hummingbird guarding her fledgling twain,
Opposing her tiny body there
'Gainst the allied force of wind, hail and rain.

What a tiny thing, with such odds to face!
And how can she ever expect to win?
'Tis like using the ocean drop by drop
To wash from this earth all blackening sin.

Yes, but there sits she on her nest of down,
All securely shielding her fledgeling twain,
The mother-love true, as it is elsewhere,
Protecting her dear ones from every pain.

THE NAMES ON THE TREE.

When we cut our names upon the tree together,
In those glad days now past so long, long by,
We hoped to walk, through sun and stormy weather,
A-down life's pathway, dearest, you and I.

But your way led to marts where grace and beauty
Are bartered oft for gems and yellow gold,
While I am in the far and distant North-land,
Where crystal streams are gushing icy cold.

One time I sought to find the dear old tryst-tree,
To read again the words writ that glad day;
But, O the wrath of Heaven had fallen on it—
Across my path all mouldering it lay!

And thus my wasted life lies at your feet now,
And you sweep past it in your calm beauty,
Not seeing, nor yet caring, for the true heart
That's mouldering as the names cut on the tree.

A JUNE MEMORY.

My Beth, do you remeber
  When we sought for "turkey peas"
Out in the April woodland,
  Out under the naked trees?

Let's go now to the woodland,
  Now the trees are in full leaf—
Full leaf and flower in June-time,
  And we'll cull a goodly sheaf.

A sheaf of fragrant beauties,
  That hie to the wood in June;
Delicate-tinted darlings,
  As pale as a crescent moon.

Dainty white-eyed violets,
  Later comers of the spring;
And see, Beth, how these crowfeet
  Right close to the brown mould cling.

And yonder Jack is preaching
In his lowly pulpit, see?
Preaching, in "God's first temple,"
Of sweet peace and purity.

Those dainty ferns and lichens,
That delicate maidenshair,
Get for the dear grandmother
At home in her rocking-chair.

She gathered, when a maiden,
These gems from the wood's highway,
To deck both bower and altar
And feast on our wedding day.

They'll bring to her fond mem'ries
Of youth and life's gladsome spring.
Ever the aged look backward
And fondly to past joys cling.

A blithesome lass, and comely,
Was the grandame in her youth;
And from her eyes of azure
There looked love and trust and truth.

Your eyes are like hers, Bethy;
Your hair the same sunny gleam.
As she has lived, may you, dear;
May your life, as hers, be clean.

But I am moralizing,
In the wood, and sunny June,
Unto a bright-eyed lassie,
As though she were past life's noon.

My old feet, too, are weary,
And, though flowers are wondrous fair,
I fain would wander homeward
To my old mate in her chair.

Another day we'll wander
In the wood and by the stream,
And a sheaf of fragrant posies
Then together we will glean.

But now the ferns and lichens
And delicate maidenshair
Let's take for mem'ries olden
To the grandame in her chair.

AFTER THE STORM.

See, after the beating hail and rain,
The sun gleams out with golden rays;
The birds burst forth in glad refrain,
And with joyous songs of praise.

And, O the glory of rolling mead,
And of woods decked in tender green,
And sweet May flowers, rain-washed, pure,
With the sunlight glinting a-tween!

The rich brown soil by ploughman turned,
With its furrows straight and long,
Adds to the picture's harmony,
As does the wild-birds' gladsome song.

The leaden sky and muttered threat
Of the thunder passing on
Are backgrounds for bird-song and flower,
Lighted up by the setting sun.

'Tis a pæan of peace after strife—
Bird-song, flowers and golden light—
And we drift out on its restfulness
To the waiting arms of night.

CONNECTICUT.

Dear old Connecticut! a "Fatherland" true!
Oft as in dreams my thoughts turn unto you;
To thy tall mountain tops, toward Heaven reaching;
Thy stones, mystic lakes, and cliffs with their teaching.

Dear old Connecticut! I love thee, I ween!
Gray cliff, pine-clad hill and brooklet a-tween,
Rushing and gushing, its brown waters skipping,
Until each gray bowlder's an urn overtipping—

O'ertipping and spilling a nectar divine
That from thy mountain lakes sparkles like wine—
To lave the foot of yon mount to Heaven turning,
Thy stones with stories, thy cliffs with their sermons.

Dear old Connecticut! right often in dreams
I see the laurel-crowned; richly it gleams;
I see thy somber pines, toward Heaven yearning;
I see thy storied stones, thy cliffs with their sermons.

Dear old Connecticut, thou'rt laurel-crowned right!
Lo! how in wood and field it gleameth bright!
See it creeping, twining and upward turning,
Wreathing thy storied stones, cliffs with their sermons.

WEDDED STREAMS.

[A Sequel to Ponds of Sandborn.]

One day I solved the mystery
  Of our sleeping waterside,
That I thought the "King o' Silence"
  Had chosen for his bride.
It was in the early springtime,
  And the rains came fast and free,
And the earth in fullness thereof
  Seemed like an inland sea.

And 'twas then the great White River
  Softly rose from out his bed,
And inland, and 'cross wide country,
  With fleeting footsteps sped
Till he reached our sleeping lakelet,
  Bedecked with lily flowers,
Sleeping all quiet and serene
  Beneath her woodland bowers.

Then he kissed the "Sleeping Beauty,"
And so waked her from her dream,
And she rose to give him greeting
And thus became a stream.
And then, wedded thus together,
They rushed along their way
One great and mighty river,
Like a giant at his play.

So I found my idle dreaming
And my pity all in vain,
When I saw her wooer rushing
'Cross valley, wood and plain;
For she waited for his coming
In her bed bedecked with flowers,
As many a bride awaiteth
In this "work-'day" world of ours.

She was not the "bride o' Silence,"
But of great White Water fair,
Who kissed her into waking,
Then left her sleeping there.
And the grim trees gently fan her,
Standing watchful by her side,
Till again the great White River
Kiss awake his sleeping bride.

REMINISCENCES OF OLD YORK STATE.

O those glorious times in old York State!
Where they got up early and sat up late;

And drove fast horses, and races ran;
And 'twas not win who may, but win who can;

Where proud old drivers their whips would crack,
As they curled the lash o'er each glossy back,

And each sleigh or carriage flew along
To the crackle and clip of the lash's song.

The gist of the times showed in "Wicked Liffe,"
Who crashed her incumbrance against a cliff,

Kicked free from harness and quickly ran,
Not to be vanquished by mortal man,

Much less by horses that let men ride!
These dared not cope with her fleet-footed stride.

Thrice glorious were those good old days!
From dusky bootboy, with erratic ways—

From dusky bootboy, and old black cook,
Who knew "Massa's" ways "just like a book"—

From mansion old, with sheltering pines,
Where great-grandfather dwelt in olden times—

From mansion old to o'erhanging cliff,
To where—O ye shade of old "Wicked Liffe!"

And, shade of great-grandsire, in old York State!
(Where they got up early and turned in late);

Where they brimmed great "bumpers" and "drank to joy"—
In old York State, when *our sire* was boy;

Where they gathered around the open fire,
And made the flames leap high and higher;

And roasted apples, and chestnuts, too,
And stories told of ghost and boogaboo;

Where the winds blew cold and snow piled high
And drowned the stars in the bended sky;

Where drifts climbed high, and climbed again,
Thus darkening many a window-pane,

And made their stories the more complete,
In this the great-grandfather's country seat—

Where they got up early and stayed up late,
In those good old days in old York State.

Lo! a wraith full oft from those glad days
Glides even now along our highways!

When, with all of old New England pride,
We oft see a courser headlong stride,

All heedless of threats or proffered "fines,"
Guided so true, with taut, stiffened lines,

And—shade of great-grandsire, most rever'd man!—
Just pass this driver all ye who can!

And ye ancient shade of "Wicked Liffe,"
There are many projections ye can biff;

But he'll get up early and stay up late
Who would vanquish "blood" from old York State.

ENCHANTMENT.

A glad thought sparkled through my brain—
  Sparkled and filled my veins like wine.
It rendered alike all things grandly new;
Not a cloud dimmed the sky's eternal hue;
  Aye, and life and fond hope were mine.
And the glad thought was all of you, girlie;
Yes, the thought, dear, was all of you.

A dear wish crept into my heart,
  E'en as the thought seethed through my brain,
And it came and found me both leal and true—
O it came and thrilled me through and through
  With a new, yet delicious pain!
And the source of the wish was you, girlie;
O the source of the wish was you.

A fond hope fills my being all;
  Let me whisper it low in your ear;
Let me read my fate in your eyes so blue,
And while I tell my love so fond and true,
  Come and rest in my bosom, dear,
And I'll find my Heaven in you, girlie;
O I'll find my Heaven in you.

WHEN MY SHIP COMES IN.

"When my ship comes in,
Comes from o'er the sea,
She will bring rich gifts to me, to me!"
So sang a maiden,
O joyously!
In her cottage home
By the deep blue sea.

"There are precious gems
And silks in the hold;
Her captain's my lover, braw and bold."
So sang the maiden
Most fair to see,
As she wrought in the
Sunshine, fancy free.

When the tide arose,
Lo! a ship came in
That bore the maid from this world of sin!
She'd a jeweled crown,
A harp of gold,
But grim Death was her
Captain, stern and cold.

THE MAN IN THE MOON.

How many queer sights do you think are seen
By that dear old "Man in the Moon?"
He seems far off, but is really near—
Close enough to see, close enough to hear
Many words of love, many cries of fear,
When this work-a-day world's aswoon—
Aswoon with sleep, at the night's "high noon"—
When he turns on his searchlight keen.

How many mysteries would be made plain,
To how many hearts hope would call!
Could the "Man in the Moon" tell all he knew,
Why, the newspaper men would turn sky blue
With envy, and then all seek "pastures new,"
Where his searching gaze could not fall
And blaze like "handwriting on the wall"
To the world all they'd sought with pain.

If only the wise old "Man in the Moon,"
As he calmly "sits up aloft,"
Could tell all he heard and just half he saw,
We need not be harried with so much law
By bloodthirsty lawyers with endless jaw,
Who bleed us many times and oft,
And line their nests with our plumage soft,
While "Justice" is always their tune.

If only the "Man in the Moon" could guide,
Each heart would soon find its true mate.
What need of preachers, or physicians' arts,
Pretending to heal our poor breaking hearts,
Then, by trading our hurts to public marts,
They breed only bitterest hate?
Then sneer as we cry, "Too late, too late!"
And are lost in the rushing tide.

If only the kind old "Man in the Moon,"
As he quietly lists above,
Could tell us below everything he hears,
As he wends his way throughout endless years,
Serenely above this sad vale of tears,
He could soothe aching hearts with love,
And teach them to look afar above,
Where amaranthine flowers bloom.

EUGENE FIELD.

O Poet, with the youthful heart!
Singer sweet and children's friend,
May amaranthine flowers bloom
Where'er your feet may trend.

And may a sweetly soothing song
Ever mingle with your dreams,
Lisping a mystic melody,
With silken swish and gleams.

Full oft I soothed my little ones
With your dreamy "Sleep, O Sleep!"
Before they sank upon that couch
Where palest lilies weep.

And if you now are singing still
Upon fair Heavenly plains,
My little ones will surely know
The old familiar strains,

And mayhap think the mother near,
  Who oft sang in days of yore
Your little happy-hearted songs,
  That will live forevermore;

And may greet you with sweet cooing,
  Or with glad uplifted arms,
Whene'er they hear the lullabies
  With the old familiar charms.

Then out of thy great singing heart
  Let one song float soft and low,
To 'mind my tiny waiting ones
  Of the mother here below.

I AM SO TIRED!

There are ruts and stones for the tired feet,
And thorns o'erhead, where the branches meet,
That tear the hair and clinging hands,
Just as the stones bleed the stumbling feet;
And, dear Lord, I am so tired!

There are thorns hidden 'neath the roses red,
And beautiful flow'rs with all fragrance fled,
And widows' sighs and sick-bed moans,
And broken hearts for their early dead;
And, dear Lord, I am so tired!

There are tiny mounds in the churchyard there,
Hiding 'way faces unearthly fair,
And parted lovers, heartfelt woe,
And sin in the shade of the church spires fair;
And, dear Lord, I am so tired!

There is promised "rest" where bright waters flow,
And, as we are "known," we shall also "know";
But, with sin's blight on every hand,
Ah! when is to come this afterglow?
And, kind God, I am so tired!

THE PASSING DEAD.

Uncover the head, for the dead's passing by!
All should them this mute respect extend.
You may not know them, nor yet do I;
It may be an enemy or a friend!
But bare the head for the passing dead!

Uncover the head, for the dead's passing by,
Mournfully borne to his last long rest;
He may be a villain of darkest dye,
Or he may be one of God's chosen "best!"
But bare the head for the passing dead!

Uncover the head, for the dead's passing by—
Some clay from which the spirit has fled
Back unto its Maker, beyond the sky—
Somebody's beautiful, beautiful dead!
O bare the head for the passing dead!

Uncover the head. for the dead's passing by!
He may be unblest and unshriven;
It may be the clay of a little child,
And "of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."
O bare the head for the passing dead!

THE EIDELWEISS.

You say we can't search for flowers to-day,
As they are hidden deep under the snow;
So come, little one, and climb on my knee,
And a fancied journey we will go.

We've no airship with which to abridge space,
But the steeds of fancy we can command;
Let us harness these to the car of thought
And journey to far-off Switzerland.

And we'll climb its mounts, as all tourists do—
Its mountains capped with eternal snow;
Its mountains dressed in old winter's garb,
While flowers teem in the vale below.

And we'll seek the source of yon gushing stream,
For, lo! where its icy fountains arise,
It is there the dainty wind-flowers grow,
The frail Alpine rose, the Eidelweiss.

'Tis a child of the snow, this fragile flower
Here, and far, far above the haunts of man;
'Tis an emblem of Heavenly purity,
A part of the All-wise Father's plan.

So flowers can grow, e'en where snow lies deep!
'Most anything's possible 'neath the sun.
There! unharness our steeds and let them rest,
And be off to your play, now, little one.

A SYLVAN DREAM.

[Song.]

I wander through the forest old,
'Mid paths I trod in days long gone;
The autumn leaves of red and gold
Are wafted by soft breezes on.
A calm lies over dale and hill,
The twittering birds sing dreamily,
The lisping of the woodland rill
Echoes the hum of drowsy bee.
Yet all seems changed and sad, despite
The spell erst found in autumn days;
The scenes that thrilled me with delight
Now cloud my sight with dreary haze.

And whence the charm that once I found,
The charm that made all things so fair,
The charm that made my pulses bound
And freed my heart from anxious care?

Is it that I wander here alone
  Beneath the spreading forest trees?
A dear one from my side has flown;
  No voice comes floating on the breeze,
As in those days long since gone by,
  When love was fond and hope was strong
And life was as a summer's day,
  All rife with joy and glad with song.

But though alone I roam in sadness,
  There soon will dawn a blissful day
When we again shall meet in gladness,
  Our parted hands be joined for aye.
Then hearts made tenderer by longing,
  And eyelids free from blinding tears,
Will purest hope and joy come thronging
  And banish all our doubts and fears;
And we'll wander as in days gone by,
  When love was fond and hope was strong
And life was as a summer's day,
  All rife with joy and glad with song.

BEAUTIFUL WORLD.

'Tis a beautiful world we live in,
When all decked in living green;
When May's flowers bloom
Over winter's tomb,
And the sun falls in golden sheen,
And the sun falls in golden sheen.

'Tis a beautiful world we live in,
When the orchards in pink and white
Drift perfumed snow
On the turf below,
Beneath the young moon's pale light,
Beneath a young moon's pale light.

'Tis a beautiful world we live in,
When the heart is full of love,
When the mate is near,
And her voice I hear,
As sweet as the cooing dove,
As sweet as a cooing dove.

OLD-TIME CHEER.

[To My Old Friend, H. C.]

O the rain's on the roof,
  And the pine trees are sighing;
Pile on the hick'ry logs,
  And set the sparks a-flying
Up the wide-mouth chimney,
  For the time's ripe for stories
Of ghosts, "ha'nts" and "painters,"
  "Injuns," wolves and Tories.

O the rain's on the roof,
  And the pine trees are moaning;
Bring in the cider, girls,
  And fill the mugs a foaming.
Gourd's good enough fer dad,
  As sure as you are born!
Put the apples down to roast,
  And parch the yellow corn.

O the rain's on the roof,
And the pine trees are shrieking;
Boys, choose your partners,
And set your boots a-creaking!
O trip down the center
As light as cider foam,
And dance to the music
Of the old horn comb.

O the rain's on the roof,
And the pine trees are sighing;
Turn the apples 'round, Bub;
Don't you hear them frying?
O the daytime's for work,
But when the day's work is done
Then's time for right good cheer
And merriment and fun.

O the star's shining out,
And the pine trees sobbing low;
Fill up the mugs again,
And make the fire glow.
Here's to the good old hearth,
And rosy lads and lasses;
Drink to the good old sports
With brimming cider glasses.

MY BABY'S SONG.

My baby's little song,
Sung all one dull day long,
Was, "Pretty, pretty, pretty,
Pretty, pretty."
A happy little rhyme,
Without tune or time;
It ran, "Pretty, pretty, pretty,
Pretty, pretty."

He sang it 'mid his toys;
Through their jingle and noise
Ran, "Pretty, pretty, pretty,
Pretty, pretty."
I watched him at his play,
And the entire winter day
All was, "Pretty, pretty, pretty,
Pretty, pretty."

The little voice is mute;
No fabled lyre nor lute
Can chime the "Pretty, pretty,
Pretty, pretty,"
My baby sang of yore,
'Mid his playthings on the floor,
His happy song of "Pretty,
Pretty, pretty."

MY QUEEN O' MAY.

The birds were singing in meadow and grove,
Singing so blithe and gay,
While to and fro, in an orchard old,
We wandered one bright May day,
My love and I,
O my love so shy!
"Sweets to the sweet," was the robin's cry.

As he showered the petals, pink and white,
Down on her upturned face,
No fairer flower among them gleamed,
As she caught them with airy grace.
O apple blows!
Sweet summer snows!
Though the years have fled, your fragrance grows.

I wove a gay garland to deck her brow,
All on that fair spring day,
And kissed and named her "Queen of Hearts"
And crowned her my Queen o' May.
O childish play!
O Queen of May!
She'll reign in my heart and home alway.

GRANDFATHER'S ECHO.

You've been talking with an echo?
My dear, how strange it seems!
The memory of one in my youth
Still oft haunts me in my dreams.

For there used to be one, Bethy,
Upon a woodland hill,
Quite near unto my childhood home;
I can hear its chatter still.

O I wish you could have heard it!
It was a merry gnome,
And on the wooded hillside
This, my fairy, had its home.

No, child, I could never find it,
Though I've sought oftentime;
Among the rocks and bowlders
Had many a weary climb.

For I felt that I should find there
A cavern in the hill,
Containing many wonders,
And the fancy haunts me still.

I pictured how it all must be;
It was the Brownies' queen,
Who led her followers at night,
There to dance on Lincoln's green.

And my faith was never broken;
The voice upon the hill
Never failed to answer,
And I hug that fancy still—

That my echo was a fairy
That danced on Lincoln's green,
With gay voice that all might hear,
But whose form was all unseen.

Your grandfather was fanciful—
A lonely, dreamy boy,
Thirsting so for comradeship
That an echo gave him joy.

So I'd call and it would answer;
Then I would follow on,
Sure each time I'd found its lair,
But my fairy would be gone.

And then I'd wander farther still,
Sure I was on its track;
Then call, and it would answer,
Fairly laughing, at my back.

No, my Beth, I never found it;
But I should like to know
If it still calls to other boys,
As to me so long ago;

And if e'er they try to find it,
In its haunts on the hill;
And if they follow as I did,
And e'er follow as I will.

For I always hear it, Bethy—
I hear it in my dreams,
And follow it in dreamland
On green hillsides and by streams.

And I'll aye expect to hear it
Now on the "forward track,"
But when I've crossed Death's river,
O I'll hear it call me back!

Back to you and other loved ones,
For Heaven can't be fair
Until my earthly "echoes"
Are safely sheltered there.

For this life is but an echo
To that one 'cross Death's stream;
Those gone before call to us,
And we answer them in dreams.

We talk to them in dreams, my child;
They call us to sweet rest;
Some day the dream will real be,
In the mansions of the blest.

And when one glad day we join them
Beyond Death's rolling stream,
We'll find that life the real,
This an echo of a dream.

Go, my child; talk to your echo;
Let it speak kind words to you.
Kind words are never hurtful,
And you'll find your echo true.

THE OLD MIDDLEFORK CHURCH.

We went to the old, old church one night,
  Climbed its crumbling altar stair,
And there stood with our faces all young and bright
  Where our forefathers knelt in prayer.

We stood wide-eyed and with bated breath
  'Mid decay of the time-worn room,
And felt that the gray, ghastly shadow Death
  E'en might lurk in its twilight gloom.

One said: "My mother worshiped here,
  In the days long, long since gone by,
But she's slept undisturbed many a year
  'Neath the spreading arch of the sky."

"And my father, when a merry lad,
  Here first learned the Christian's hope;
Now he kneels at a shrine 'mid the golden sands
  Of the far-off Pacific's slope."

We each of us had our tale to name,
Of how oft 'neath its friendly shade
We had paused to rest from our merry games,
Bold youth, yes, and frolicsome maid;

And how we had built our "play-house" small
In nooks rich with ivy and clover,
And had chased the merrily bounding ball
In wild games of "ante over."

But time speeds on with relentless tread,
And thus everything has its day;
So the pioneer church that sheltered our dead
Has been swept from the earth away.

Its fragments are scattered far and wide;
Only graves dot the hillside green;
And where once stood the joy of the countryside,
Lo! the goldenrod waves serene.

"FEEDING THE DOVES."

Phyllis, dark-eyed, dark-browed,
With a wealth of dusky hair;
Phyllis, with the winsome face,
And with sweetly childish air;
Phyllis, feeding her milk-white doves,
Makes a picture wondrous fair.

Phyllis, don your tattered hat
And join me in a ramble;
In yon meadow rolling wide
The lambkins frisk and gambol,
And yonder densely wooded hill
Invites us to a scramble.

And yonder swiftly running brook,
Dancing o'er golden pebbles,
Singing as it glides along
In mimic bass and treble—
Phyllis, I know your sun-browned feet
Are longing in't to dabble.

Phyllis, half woman and half child,
With a winsome, wholesome grace,
Dash thy dusky locks aside;
Let me read thy witching face.
'Tis healthy, happy, gay and free,
And of sorrow not one trace.

Phyllis, could time stand still with you,
Could you keep your girlhood sweet,
Chase the lambkins at their play,
Wade the brook with sun-browned feet,
Would e'er you tire of girlish joys?
Would life thus be incomplete?

Shun womanhood and be a child!
Love has oft a bitter sting;
Many heartbreaks lurk within
The band of a wedding ring.
O Phyllis, merry, winsome maid,
Would your life might e'er be spring!

KEEPSAKES.

These my keepsakes, yes, I love them,
For full oft they speak to me
On varied themes from storied past,
And from long-gone Used-to-be.

Then, the near past has its quota,
Too, among my treasures dear;
As I listen to each speaking,
Many stories strange I hear.

They oft tell me of the old days,
When life was filled with zest;
Often tell of joys and sorrows,
And my fancy paints the rest.

For they're some the works of Nature,
As well as those wrought by man;
Some as ancient as the hills are;
Some have scarce a summer's span.

And I ofttimes try to place them
Each back to its old-time use—
To give each familiar settings
Ere they suffered man's abuse.

This fragile cup of ancient delf,
Of a quaint and dainty make,
A treasure is from "auld lang syne,"
Also for the giver's sake.

What dainty hands of ancient dames
Have oft handled it with care,
And nectar sipped from its depths,
Charmed with its beauty rare!

These spreading horns of antler'd stag,
From the hills of Used-to-be,
Oft tell of days it bounding ran,
A great monarch, fleet and free;

Of when he roamed the hills among,
Or crossed the forest wide
With fleet and graceful footsteps,
His own dear ones by his side.

This crown of monarch of the wood—
Yes, of king in days of yore—
Supinely now, and vanquished,
Hangs above my chamber door.

This linen web came from a loom
More than fifty years ago;
The last web of a toiler whom
My child-heart loved to know.

And she gave it me a keepsake,
Spun and woven by her hand—
It, the last of many triumphs—
Feeling I would understand

Both aged gift and aged giver,
And would treasure it when she
Had long made the silent crossing
To a vast Eternity.

As I smooth the shining fabric
Of this offering of love,
I know the hands that wrought it
Are a-resting now above.

Are long resting from their labors,
  While her check'd life's warp and woof
Runs with mine in full pattern,
  Like her weaving, clean of proof.

And see this twisted candlestick,
  That stands here upon my right;
How many eyes have sparkled
  'Neath its mellow, yellow light!

And here, too, are abalona shells,
  From the great Pacific slope,
Where rivers run o'er sands of gold
  And its fountains "sing of hope."

And here's a larger murm'ring shell,
  That low whispers of the sea,
And oft a story to me tells
  Of far-distant, wave-swept lea.

And see this nest of hummingbird,
  All so fragile, yet so true;
I watched it building and complete,
  Lichen thatched, with honey-dew.

This block of ore from distant mines
Is veined with yellow gold,
While this one a grist of silver
Fast within its embrace holds.

But 'tis not the precious metal
That makes these, my treasures, dear,
But the kind thought of the giver,
And the care that brought them here.

Yes, the care and pain and suff'ring
Of those who gave them birth;
Who fierce wrested them from coffers
'Mong the hills old as the earth.

See, e'en the spicy Orient
Here has added to my store,
Its finely-carved offerings
Engraved in mystic lore.

And I take up this quaint salver,
Balanced thus upon my hand,
And oft note its dainty gravure,
Wrought in far-off India's land.

And I wonder what its holdings;
Could I speak its foreign tongue,
Would it sing as bards so often
Have of spicy odors sung?

Would it sing of tropic jungles?
Would it tell of arid plains?
Or a tale of love and languor—
Fancies of a fevered brain?

Or would it tell a tale of woe,
Of mines and of starving bands?
O, mayhap, this was the life-work
Of poor, toiling yellow hands!

See, I stir this sparkling nectar
With a dainty Turkish spoon,
Far wafted to me from the land
Of lone star and crescent moon.

And I note the strange devices
And the fragile carving there,
While I wonder what my lips press
In its mottoes seeming fair.

There stands an ancient timepiece,
That has measured time by hours
For full many generations.
See its grim face deck'd with flow'rs,

Which it vainly tries to cover
With its ever-shifting hands.
'Tis a humbug, yet I love it,
For I feel it understands

That it is thus a travesty.
Old Time bedecked with flowers!
Relentless Fate, decked gaily,
Checking off our fleeting hours!

This Indian pestle's now at rest,
Nor important drama plays,
As when, in fierce redman's wigwam,
It oft ground the yellow maize.

And, too, this grewsome tomahawk
Has long found a resting-place,
And of love for war, nor warery,
Ne'er could any find one trace.

And yet of long past triumphs
It a tale oft speaks to me,
Of when in primeval forests
The red man wandered free;

When, with bow and painted quiver,
He oft sped upon the chase,
Or stalked with wary footsteps,
Noiseless, yes, nor leaving trace;

Oft of trophies that it garnered—
Gory trophies, madly flung
'Round feathered polls, then dripping,
Were from belts of wampum hung.

And these arrows oft went with him,
Speeding home so strong and true
To the quivering heart that waited
Death's one message, old yet new.

But their gory quest is ended,
And I treasure thus with pride
These relics of a mighty race
That once claimed this country wide.

And here's an ancient spinning-wheel,
Busy worker to the last;
It wrought for generations gone,
But its usefulness is past.

Yet it tells me oft of triumphs
It achieved in days of old;
How it clothed the generations
Of hardy settlers bold;

How it hummed a patient greeting
To each sturdy pilgrim brave—
Hummed to them in their cradles,
And from cradle to the grave.

But now its busy life is done,
And its days of toil are o'er;
'Tis a keepsake highly prized
For the good it did of yore.

And here's a pipe from out the past;
Yes, a "pipe o' peace" it were;
From its bowl to amber mouthpiece,
See, it speaks of comfort rare.

Lo! here is a scarred old volume,
From a bard of olden times,
And the sound of liquid music
Drips through its ancient rhymes.

And I catch the mellow nectar,
As it drips a-down the years,
And I bathe my thirsting soul thus
In the "music of the spheres."

O I'm drunken with my holdings—
My old treasures dear to me—
For they are representatives
Of the dear loved Used-to-be.

They are links that bind me closely
To the e'er receding past,
To the past, full of endearments
All too beautiful to last.

"THE PARTING OF THREE WAYS, EACH A TRAGEDY."

Three brothers started out in the world,
  All happy as Kings, I ween;
One was all for good, and the other bad,
  While the third one was "'twixt and 'tween."
The one that was good, was so very good,
  He was really good for naught;
For he was e'en too good to work;
  It would spoil his hands, he thought.
So he went about with pious hands
Folded across his stomach bands,
  A-sponging off those who wrought.
Yet he was Priest! He did God's work!
Did God e'er know how Priest could shirk
And shift his burdens out of hand?
Some things are hard to understand.

The one that was very bad, indeed,—
  "All bad," so the neighbors said—
Well, he would "get drunk" when he had the means,
  Then he "painted the whole town red."

There were very many bad things told—
  Grievous sins, and most grievous harms—
Yet I've seen children leave their play,
  Run and meet him with outstretched arms.
O I've seen him soothe a dying bed;
No stray dog ever went unfed;
  Seen lame ones nestled in his arms.
I've seen him give all that he had
To helpless ones; yet he was bad.
All bad! With ever kindly hand!
Some things are hard to understand.

The one that was only 'twixt and 'tween—
  Well, very few thought of him;
If he had but few lights, they, like his shades,
  Were both correspondingly dim.
For he did no good, nor yet great harm—
  Just bound up in himself was he.
He knew not sweets of stolen fruits,
  No, nor the sweets of charity.
When or how he died few ever knew,
Nor cared they where his soul went to
  (If there's soul in nonentity).
This the one that was 'twixt and 'tween,
Neither good, nor yet was he mean,
But medium, why, wa'n't he grand?
Some things are hard to understand.

THE BIRD OF PASSAGE.

A strange bird fluttered from eerie Where
  Out into the mystic When,
Yet paused for a space on bended wing
  Ere it flitted beyond your ken.

Pausing, it sang by the waterways,
  And chirruped by silent stream;
E'en rang a chime on the lily bells
  That dimpled that wave-lorn dream.

It whistled 'mong whisp'ring birchen boughs,
  And the echoes caught the strain,
And flung the mellowed notes abroad
  Till the zephyrs kissed the refrain.

It sang along the winding highways,
  Where glittered the goldenrod,
And among the purple asters tall,
  Sweet, it sang of a gracious God.

Thus singing, it passed on and on,
Aye, e'en up the hillside slope,
And then its notes took a gentler strain,
For it sang now of Faith and Hope.

And its song 'mong homes that rested there,
Low-fluted, like nesting dove,
Sweet benedictions from out full heart,
A glad pæan of peace and love.

Then, with heart-full cry to eerie When,
That rose e'en to Heaven's dome,
Like lost soul thirsting for happiness,
O the wanderer sang of home.

With tired wings beating through mists of When,
In quest of the mirage Where,
And backward glances to field and grove
That all smiling lay and fair,

The homeless wanderer sang of home,
In Tantalus grasp of When,
And, searching aye for that haven blest,
Lo! it flitted beyond your ken.

THE OCEAN AND LIFE.

I stood on the beach, one autumn day,
Watching the waves at their ceaseless play.
I watched them tossing themselves about,
All hurrying in and rushing out,
All sparkling and dimpling as in glee,
All rollicking, happy, gay and free.

This on the surface, while far below
There lurks many sights of bitterest woe.
Aye, of sunken ships, with broken spars;
Of battleships, showing gaping scars,
And of guns and wreckage sunken here
And forming many a grewsome bier.

And where loathsome, slimy monsters creep
Many human bones lie buried deep.
I thought, as I watched the waves at play,
All on that beauteous autumn day,
How like they were to this real life—
Smiles on the surface, hearts full of strife.

THE MOONLIGHT TRYST.

When the moon rides high in the summer sky,
O 'tis then my dear love I'll meet;
Out in the lane, near the rip'ning grain,
Then my dear one I'll gladly greet
'Neath the light of the moon,
And the bright of the moon,
And the wonderful sheen
And delight of the moon,
As it shimmers and laughs in rose-crowned June
With the lilt of an old love tune.

And the tune is there, tangled in her hair—
Silken threads from the warp of fate;
And the moon so fair, shining on her there,
On my love, on my heart's own mate.
Bless the light of the moon,
And the bright of the moon,
And the wonderful sheen
And delight of the moon,

As it shimmers and laughs in rose-crowned June
With the lilt of an old love tune.

And the moon so wise, looking in her eyes,
Laughing down in her upturned face,
Sees none more fair than my sweetheart there,
As she waits at our trysting place,
'Neath the light of the moon,
And the bright of the moon,
And the wonderful sheen
And delight of the moon,
As it shimmers and laughs in rose-crowned June
With the lilt of an old love tune.

And the moon is there, tangled in her hair,
A most willing captive, yet bold.
O sweetheart mine! O my love divine!
Come and list to my story old,
'Neath the light of the moon,
And the bright of the moon,
And the wonderful sheen
And delight of the moon,
As it shimmers and laughs in rose-crowned June
With the lilt of an old love tune.

O radiant moon! O sweet old love tune!
O maiden with ringlets of gold!
My love is true, O sweetheart, to you,
And its story has oft been told
'Neath the light of the moon,
And the bright of the moon,
And the wonderful sheen
And delight of the moon,
As it shimmers and laughs in rose-crowned June
With the lilt of an old love tune.

A MESSENGER OF SPRING.

O the winter was long, the days were dreary,
And I so hungry for spring!
E'en for April, that changeling so teary;
Heart-hungry to hear the birds sing.

Yes, heart-hungry to see the bright sun shining
E'en here in the noisome town;
It seems such a long, long time of waiting
For Nature to shake off the brown—

To shake off the brown and winter-stained garb
And don the gay robe of spring;
O so long to wait for the green plush sward
And the blossoms that May-times bring.

Lo! a sunfleck of gold, kiss'd awake by the breeze,
Gleams bright in the morning hour,
And I just go down on penitent knees
And kiss the dear dandelion flower.

MY DREAMLAND POSSESSIONS.

So I'm fanciful—a dreamer?
And is that, dear, what you say,
Who have known me, child and woman,
Full many a year and day?

Well, let me dream; my life's my own;
It has many sunny gleams;
And let me live it as I will
'Mong the children of my dreams.

And come go with me to Dreamland,
Where my many castles be,
O most beautiful in structure,
Just beside a Dreamland sea.

They're mirrored in its crystal depth
From the sunlit cliffs above,
And from battlement to turret
They e'er breathe of home and love.

And full many ships are sailing
  Upon this my Dreamland main,
Well manned with gallant seamen,
  Children of my heart and brain.

And there, too, the saucy mermen
  Blow on trumpet shells of gold,
And, O the shells that strew the shore
  Are beautiful to behold.

And there the merry mermaidens,
  Poised on waves, glide to the shore
And cast rare treasures at my feet,
  Singing each, forevermore,

Of wonders hidden 'neath the sea,
  Caverns vast and coral halls,
Where mirrored suns reflections cast,
  Lighting up fair jewel'd walls.

And trailing monsters watchful lie,
  A-guarding great treasures there,
While on coral reefs, in grottoes,
  Sirens comb their yellow hair.

And the vessels that come gliding
  Swift across my Dreamland sea,
With cargoes from the Orient,
  Spicy odored, and for me.

And my true love oft goes sailing,
  With me nigh unto his side,
And oft we sail on skyey mains,
  While the stars light up the tide.

We sail away to "wonderlands,"
  In the old world and the new,
And, O the melodies we hear,
  And beauteous sights we view!

Then we wander in vast forests,
  Beside my castle walls;
O the singing of the wild birds!
  O the sheen of waterfalls!

And the lakes, and brooks, and rivers,
  With sweet lilies on their brink!
Oft we lift a snowy chalice
  And from fragrant petals drink.

O the fawns that play about us,
And the deer that never roam;
All unharmed they by sportsman,
In this their Dreamland home.

Oft we clamber up the hillsides,
And on up the craggy steep,
Thus to view a Dreamland moonrise
And my castles as they sleep.

There no bickerings may enter,
No, nor jealousy, nor strife,
Thus to mar my peaceful holdings,
Where true happiness is rife.

But there's sweetest music stealing
From out these my castles fair,
Though far sweeter than all music
Is the happy laughter there.

While the voices of the children,
As they play upon the shore,
Is incense floating Heavenward—
Fittest incense, evermore.

And 'tis mine! All mine! My Dreamland,
Castles vast and forest old;
And there's none can wrest it from me,
Not e'en you, dear, braw and bold.

Do you wonder that I love it;
That 'tis "all the world to me,"
This my wonderful dream haven,
My dream home by Dreamland sea?

So let me live; my life's my own;
A dream radiance 'round me streams.
O let me live it as I will,
'Mong these children of my dreams!

GRANDFATHER AND THE BICYCLE.

So this is your brand-new wheel, you say?
A fine, genuine bicycle?
E'en to think of you, child, a-riding this
Makes me cold as an icicle.

But Teddy is going with you, you say,
To teach you just how you should ride;
So the day has come when the grandfather
Is not needed, Beth, at your side?

O the times are changing fast, my child,
And old fogies must stand aside,
Aye, and give the road, and then walk alone,
While the gay youths and maidens ride.

Tut! child; do not weep; 'tis Nature's plan;
Forget an old man's lonesome cry!
While you wait for Ted I'll tell of a ride
I gave a lass in days gone by.

The route we took was an unwise one;
'Twas rough, a mere path, and narrow,
But my little love rode a wheel in state,
Though hers was an old wheelbarrow.

And I pushed her car of state along
Through lush bracken, with dew all wet,
Until at a sudden turn in our path—
Well, the old wheelbarrow upset!

Just at the edge of a muddy pool,
Where the rushes and reeds grew rank,
Her coltish steed plunged after a hare
And tumbled her down the bank.

For the rest of the tale, Beth, my child,
Go ask the dear grandmother there;
She is not asleep; she just smiled down
On us from her old rocking-chair.

And take to heart the moral she'll add,
And remember it, child, through all;
The grandmother knows from experience
How "pride goeth before a fall."

THE SIGN OF THE GOLDEN KEY.

There's a wayside inn, with swinging sign—
A sign of a golden key—
That appeals to every heart as home,
With true hospitality.

'Tis far from the din of city marts,
Is this old-time hostelry;
Past wood and field and flowery lanes
Swings its sign—a golden key.

'Tis a quaint old house, low-ceiled and brown,
With nooks and turns everywhere,
And genial cheer to one and all
Breathes out of its spicy air.

There are broad, low eaves and clinging vines,
And diamond window-panes,
While, catching at every wind that blows,
Are creaking old weather-vanes.

To latticed porches sweet jasmines cling;
The "briar rose" runs at will.
Its fingers cling to coping and vane,
While it nods o'er each window-sill.

There's a garden old, with balm and rue,
Sweet Mary and lavender tall,
Primroses, thyme and the sweet clove pinks,
And hollyhocks 'gainst the wall.

Then its tiny host, alert and spry,
With his beaming kindly face,
And placid wife, with motherly ways
And sweet, wholesome, comely grace.

O the welcome there and savory fare
Of that old-time hostelry!
It lures me oft from the giddy world
With its wholesome purity.

THE SINGERS AND THEIR SONG.

'Twas only a tiny mottled bird,
  Nestling among the branches bare,
Hiding from the cold that fell
  With the March mists that filled the air.
Yet it told of spring and flowers and bees,
Of running brooks and blossoming trees,
  And yellow sunshine everywhere.

'Twas only a milkmaid at the dawn,
  Wending her way to the pasture bars,
Whom the kine, long sighing, rose to greet
  From their sound sleep beneath the stars.
But she sang with the lark; her voice was sweet,
And it made the morning all complete,
  And not one flaw the calm scene mars.

'Twas only a shepherd on the hill,
  Carefully guarding his flock aright,
But his voice came floating softly on
  Sound-waves in the dew-gemmed twilight.

Like a pæan of peace that follows strife,
Like a plea of hope for another life,
Glorifying the falling night.

'Twas only a mother at twilight,
Singing her cooing babe to sleep,
And she crooned a homely cradle song
That but a mother can make sweet;
But her loving voice and the cooing child
Was melody pure and undefiled,
And made a home scene all complete.

'Twas only a "smithy" at his forge,
And the bellows he briskly plied,
While he sang of beautifying love,
Of the love that is true and tried.
O he sang of all-enduring love!
Glad gift from the Giver up above!
And of blessings that multiplied.

'Twas only a sweet-voiced Nun who sang,
Just within the grim convent wall,
Dead to the world with its many joys
And robed in funereal pall.

But, O when her peaceful voice I heard,
I bethought me of shepherd, smith and bird,
And the love that reigns over all.

For my heart was a-near to breaking,
All a-weary with heavy care,
And the song-bursts were "Balm in Gilead"
As they fell on the pulsing air.
'Twas faith, hope and love, though long deferred—
Of "hope" sang the tiny mottled bird—
And God's sunshine seemed everywhere.

A SNOWY MORN.

I wakened from long dreaming
To greet the coming day;
Lo! the morn was lowering;
The sky hung darkly gray.

Snow-fleeced coverings deck'd the earth
And draped each shrub and tree
In robes of whitest raiment,
Of soundless purity.

Hushed was the voice of Nature,
Nor sounded glad bird call,
Nor e'en the soughing breezes;
White silence lay o'er all.

A white and awesome silence,
A hush like that of death,
That awes the heart with grandeur
And strikes from lips the breath.

A white and awesome silence,
With leaden sky o'er all;
Earth in cerements of death,
The sky a gloomy pall.

LEGENDS OF THE OLD WELL.

O come with me where the old well-sweep stands,
Near the gnarled old pear tree;
I have wandered afar in many lands,
But here my heart's longed to be.

I have longed to stoop where this fount bubbles up
From beneath the pear tree old;
Would have staked my all for one sparkling cup
Of its water pure and cold.

So draw from the northeast corner of the well,
Now, a nectar pure, divine;
The northeast corner, where the lizards dwell,
Let us tap for Nature's wine.

Here Nature's fount ever runneth pure and free;
Come and quaff it, child, to-day.
'Tis icy cold where the green lizards be;
Ah! come quickly; leave your play!

When a tiny lad I oft hung o'er the brink
And sought for the lizard's eyes;
For one who could see them and never shrink
Would become most wondrous wise.

Full oft have I lain with my ear to the grass,
All hushed to hear them sing;
A charm in one's ear, should the right soul pass
Their haunt in the old well spring.

These are legends, child, that cling 'round the well—
The well great-grandfather made.
Draw a cup from where the green lizards dwell,
Beneath the gnarled pear tree's shade,

And let us list for the song the lizards sing,
And watch for their shining eyes;
It will carry me back to youth's glad spring,
When my dream was to be wise.

Nay, the green lizard's eyes ne'er met mine, I know;
Never heard I one sweet tone:
But if song e'er 'rose from the depths below,
I know 'twould be "Home, Sweet Home."

This song haunted me in my wanderings far;
Full often I felt its spell,
And it proved to be my bright guiding star
To home, and grandfather's well.

FINIS.

Lo! 'tis the end of the book!
And we together have threaded its maze!
As we fared along through its devious ways
Ye have looked deep into my heart,
Heard its loud pulsing, even as "hart
Panteth after the water brook."

Ye have stood a-near my soul!
To that great mystery, ah! very near,
So that of mystery's finding I had fear.
And this must wait the Master's solving—
Wait until Time in its revolving
Taketh us each unto our goal.

So close the book on my heart.
For it has here sung and sung unto thine,
An' ye have looked down in it, drank its wine,
And listed to its deep complaining,
And now the soul, ever restraining,
Must with it bide, and bide apart.

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